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THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH A BRIEF MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY DR. GREGORY;

AND OBSERVATIONS ON HIS CHARACTER AS A PREACHER,

BY JOHN FOSTER.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D. F.R.A.S.

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.

VOL. VI.

MEMOIR, OBSERVATIONS, &c.—SERMONS.—INDEX.

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PREFACE.

On the death of an individual so admired and revered as Mr. Hall, nothing was more natural than that a desire to possess a complete collection of his Works should be extensively felt, and almost as extensively expressed; the admirable genius and excellent spirit which pervade his compositions, as well as the singularly beautiful language in which his sentiments are generally conveyed, giving to them a very unusual fitness to instruct and impress the minds of men.

After a few conversations of a select number of Mr. Hall's intimate friends, it was resolved that a complete edition should be prepared as soon as possible; partly as a proper mark of respect for so distinguished a writer; partly, as conducive to the comfort of his family; and, partly, with a view to meet the desire so strongly felt and declared, as well as to give the utmost possible universality and permanency to the benefits which were likely to accrue from a correct and uniform edition.

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The intimate friendship which had very long subsisted between Mr. Hall and myself, and the unreserved frankness with which it was well known he often spoke to me of some of his productions, and the plans which he had formed as to the orderly republication of the chief of them, led his family and many of his friends to express a most earnest wish, that I would undertake the superintendence of the proposed Work. And, although an almost entire want of leisure from heavy official and other engagements, strongly induced me to decline the undertaking; yet the matter was so urgently pressed upon me, and every argument employed received so powerful an accession from my sincere veneration and affection for Mr. Hall, and my cordial esteem and regard for his excellent widow, that I could not withhold my assent.

My reluctance was greatly diminished on finding, that, in the preparation and arrangement of the volumes, I could, in every case where such aid seemed expedient, avail myself of the valuable judgement of Mr. Foster, and of another friend, the Rev. W. Anderson. This I have done throughout, with only two important exceptions: the one, that of a Letter on the Serampore Mission, in Vol. IV.; the other, that of the very imperfect biographical memoir which appears in the present volume, and which, from want of time, could not be subjected to their judgement.

With regard to such of Mr. Hall's writings as had been previously published, either under his

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own name, or anonymously, it was at once found that no principle of selection could be satisfactorily adopted, and that, indeed, nothing could be omitted without making ourselves responsible for all that should be retained. Besides, "if the works of departed genius are to be submitted to the censorship of a timid discretion, or the mistaken delicacy of friendship," and some suppressed, some mutilated, some softened down, who can say how far their influence may be impaired? If, for example, Mr. Hall's political writings had been suppressed, out of deference to those whose opinions were different from his; must we not, upon the same principle of omission, have suppressed his fine Defence of Catholic Communion out of deference to the Strict-Communion Baptists; his Defence of the Puritans, or of the Evangelical Clergy, out of deference to those who dislike both those classes of excellent men? And if so, why should we not have also suppressed his admirable arguments in support of orthodox Christianity, out of deference to those who maintain heterodox sentiments; and all his noble declamation, his bold invective, his spirited irony, his strong reprehension of wickedness and folly, out of deference to those who think "strong language always unbecoming," and would wish the public instructor to take off the edge of his well-meant reproof by some carefully studied, unmeaning attenuation? as though the ardent phraseology of one who thought intensely, and therefore expressed himself strongly, upon *every* subject which he deemed worthy of occupying his

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time and attention, would, by cooling it down, to meet the taste of men of lower temperament, make a deeper impression, or be productive of more lasting good. The Editors of the Works of Mr. Burke, or Bishop Horsley, have not ventured to trifle with the reputation of those extraordinary men, by the interspersion of such *lacunæ*, to meet the variable tastes of their readers; nor have we: for thus might the Works of our inimitable friend have been reduced to a mere pamphlet, and a future age have derived no more benefit from an intellect so richly endowed, so admirably directed as his, to the best and highest purposes, than if it had never existed.

Finding, therefore, no ground for any reasonable, practicable, rule of selection, none has been adopted. The only article omitted is a letter published by Mr. Hall in a newspaper nearly forty years since; and that, because, on his subsequent reconciliation to the individual addressed, both parties agreed, in the presence of their mutual friends, that all should be cast into oblivion that had been previously said or written by either in reference to the points of controversy.

In selecting from Mr. Hall's manuscripts we have not referred to his morbid sensitiveness with regard to appearing before the world, as the rule of action. But, while we have kept his high reputation in mind, we have also had in view the religious instruction of the general reader. It is truly gratifying to know that the fifth volume, which consists entirely of Notes of Sermons and

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Letters, has been as highly approved by the public as the first volume, constituted principally of Sermons prepared for the press by Mr. Hall; and that new editions of both of them have been called for, some months ago.

The following is a summary of the contents and distribution of these Works.

Vol. I.—Sermons, Charges, and Circular Letters, including a sermon on Isaiah liii. 8, not before published.

Vol. II.—Tracts on Terms of Communion, and John's Baptism.

Vol. III.—Tracts, Political and Miscellaneous, including an unpublished Fragment of a Defence of Village Preaching.

Vol. IV.—Reviews and Miscellaneous Pieces, including several not before published.

Vol. V.—Notes of Sermons from the Author's own Manuscripts, with a Selection from his Letters; the originals of which have been kindly transmitted by various friends.

Vol. VI.—Twenty-one Sermons, preached by Mr. Hall, on various occasions, and communicated by friends who were in the habit of taking down his Discourses. These are preceded by a brief Memoir of Mr. Hall's Life, by the Editor; and Observations on his character as a Preacher, by Mr. Foster.

The Sermons published in this volume, although given in different degrees of fulness, may unquestionably be regarded as presenting a more exact idea of the usual manner and substance of

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Mr. Hall's preaching, than those which were laid before the world by himself. In all, the design, the argument, and the spirit, have been admirably preserved; while in most, the very language is so nearly caught, that it requires not a strong exercise of imagination to recall the tones, whether solemn and pathetic, or rapid and impressive, with which it was actually delivered. I know not whether Mrs. Hall or the public will be under the deepest obligation to the gentlemen who have thus richly contributed to the value of the Works.

I must now refer to that of which I should most gladly have been spared the necessity of speaking—the Biographical Memoir of Mr. Hall.

Immediately after the publication of the Works was decided upon, I suggested the expediency of soliciting Sir James Mackintosh, whose talents, judgement, taste, and delicacy, as well as his known attachment to Mr. Hall, gave him a peculiar fitness for the task, to undertake a sketch of the literary and intellectual character of his deceased friend. The letter which I received in reply to my application, will shew how promptly and cordially he acceded to our wishes.

GREAT CUMBERLAND STREET,
7th March, 1831.

MY DEAR SIR,

"A GREAT man is fallen in Israel." I have reflected much on the subject of your letter, and will frankly tell you what seems to me to be right. I consider myself as speaking confidentially, in all that I say, to the friend of my ancient friend.

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* * * * * * * * *

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The only point on which I am likely to differ from you, is respecting your own fitness to write a Memoir. I shall say no more than, that, if I had the selection, I should certainly choose you.

I should be glad to see you here to breakfast on Monday next. In the meantime I may say that I approve of your plan of publishing Hall's Sermons, and, if possible, all his writings. If your want of leisure absolutely prevents you from undertaking the task, and if it be thought likely to promote the interests of Hall's family, I do not think myself at liberty to withhold the contribution of a Preface to the Editor chosen by the Family. In that case I should require a few names and dates, and a perusal of his writings published or unpublished. I own to you that I prefer the old custom of prefixing such a modest preface by way of memoir, to the modern practice of writing huge narratives of lives in which there are no events; which seems to me a tasteless parade, and a sure way of transmitting nothing to posterity.

My paper would chiefly contain the recollections of my youth, and the result of such observations on Hall's writings as a careful perusal of them might naturally suggest.

I am, my dear Sir, with real esteem,
Your's very faithfully,
J. Mackintosh.

After the interview proposed in this letter, and two or three others which shortly followed, Sir James, having matured his plan, agreed to devote about twenty pages to the purely biographical part of the Memoir, and perhaps forty more, to the critical estimate of Mr. Hall's writings, of his literary attainments, and his intellectual powers. But the pressure of his constant attendance in

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Parliament during the progress of the Reform Bills, and of his heavy occupations as chairman of the Committee on East India Affairs, compelled him to postpone this labour from time to time, until his much-lamented death, in May last, terminated his intentions, and our hopes and expectations.

Proportioned to Sir James's remarkable qualifications for giving a critical estimate of Mr. Hall's writings, and a philosophical view of the developement of his intellectual character, must be the regret of the public that his purposes were not accomplished, and the reluctance of every considerate person to attempt a similar undertaking. Indeed, the high expectations which were so generally formed, of the delight and instruction that would be imparted by Sir James's delineation, rested upon the assurance of a combination of qualities in him which *cannot* be looked for elsewhere:—an early knowledge of the subject of the memoir; a close intimacy with him at the precise time when his faculties were most rapidly unfolding; incessant opportunities of watching the peculiarities of his intellectual constitution, and of measuring, by the application of power to power, the native and growing energy of his mind; a mind of nearly the same order, and possessing many of the same characteristics; a sincere affection for his friend, ripened into as sincere a veneration for his principles; and judgement, discrimination, and feeling, most beautifully attempered, and exquisitely fitted, to trace, classify, and describe.

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Since none, therefore, it was presumed, would follow the plan thus laid down, from an absolute despair of combining the adequate pre-requisites, the idea of such a critical estimate was abandoned; and it was proposed that, instead of it, a concise Memoir, more strictly biographical, should be given.

Mr. Hall's family, and the friends immediately interested in the completion and success of these Works, strongly urged me to this additional undertaking; and though I for some weeks resisted all entreaty, and suggested applications to others, whom I sincerely thought much better qualified, yet, finding that the Works, regarded as literary property, were receiving injury from the delay, however inevitable, I at length consented to prepare the Memoir, modified, as it must be, by the necessities of the case. The reasons which so long prevented me from yielding to the wishes of these friends, may now be adduced in apology for the imperfections with which I am persuaded the Memoir abounds. I have had incessantly to encounter difficulties arising from the nature of the undertaking, — from the contrast, which will assuredly force itself upon every reader, between my unfitness to prepare any memorial of Mr. Hall, and the peculiar fitness of the distinguished individual to whom the public had been looking, — from the extraordinary character of the subject of the Memoir, — from the want of such incidents and events as give interest to biography, except, indeed, one or two, upon which no man of delicacy and

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feeling could dwell,—from an indifferent state of health, and such a total want of leisure as never allowed me to devote two successive days, and seldom indeed two successive hours, to the labour, —from the utter impracticability of postponing it to a more favourable season;—and, in addition to all the preceding, the difficulties growing out of a sense of incompetency, perpetually *felt*, to discharge with spirit and success the functions of a biographer; the habits of my life, which have been those of demonstration, disqualifying me, at least in my own judgement, for biographical or other narration.

In the midst of so many difficulties, I have endeavoured, to the extent of my own information, and such authentic information as I could collect from others, to make the reader acquainted with the principal facts in Mr. Hall's life, with his pursuits, his manners, his deportment in private and domestic life, and as a minister. I have, in short, aimed to trace him from childhood to maturity, from maturity to his death, and throughout, to present a plain, simple, accurate, and I hope, a sufficiently full account of this most eminent and estimable man. His extraordinary talents as a writer will be infinitely better inferred from the perusal of his Works, than from any such critical examination of them as I could have presented. Some of the hints which are occasionally introduced as I have proceeded, may, perhaps, assist in illustrating a few peculiarities in his intellectual character; or, by connecting some of his

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productions with the circumstances in which they were composed, may probably cause them to be perused with additional interest. But I have kept in view a still higher object,—that of tracing him in his social and moral relations, and shewing how gradually, yet how completely, his fine talents and acquirements became subordinated to the power of divine grace, and devoted to the promotion of the glory of God, and the happiness of man.

Fearing, however, that my own biographical sketch will convey but an inadequate idea, even of Mr. Hall's private and social character, I have inserted, in an Appendix, communications received from three friends, and which will, I trust, serve considerably to supply my deficiencies.

Mr. Hall's qualities as a preacher I have attempted to describe briefly, as they fell under my own notice at Cambridge; at a season when they had nearly reached their meridian with regard to intellect and eloquence, though not with respect to all the higher requisites of ministerial duty. I have also inserted, in the Appendix, a short account of Mr. Hall's preaching in 1821, written by the late Mr. John Scott. These, with the more comprehensive, elaborate, and philosophical "Observations," from the pen of Mr. Foster, will, I trust, enable such as never had the privilege of listening to Mr. Hall's instructions from the pulpit, to form a tolerable estimate of his power as a preacher. Although, as will be perceived, I differ from Mr. Foster in some of his opinions and criticisms, yet I cannot but fully appreciate the peculiar fidelity

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and corresponding beauty with which he has delineated, not merely the more prominent excellencies of Mr. Hall's sermons, both with regard to structure and delivery, but some of those which, while they are palpable as to their result, are latent as to their sources, until they are brought to light by Mr. Foster's peculiar faculty of mental research. And hence it will, I am persuaded, be found, that while he only professes to describe the character of his friend "as a preacher," he has successfully explored, and correctly exhibited, those attributes of his intellectual character, which caused both his preaching and his writing to be so singularly delightful and impressive.

In all that is thus presented, whether by my several correspondents, by Mr. Foster, or by myself, the object has not been to overload the character of our deceased friend with extravagant eulogium; but by describing it as it has been viewed by different individuals, to enable the public, and may I not add—posterity? to form, from their combined result, a more accurate estimate of his real character, intellectual, moral, and religious, than could be gathered from the efforts of any single writer.

To add to the usefulness of the Works, by facilitating reference to any part of them, a gentleman of competent judgement and information has prepared the general Index, which is placed at the end of this volume.

The whole Works are now committed to the public, with the persuasion that every part, except

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that which the Editor has felt his own inability to execute successfully, will be favourably received; and that the greater portion of the contents will be found permanently interesting, instructive, and valuable.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

Royal Military Academy,
5th Dec. 1832.

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A BRIEF MEMOIR

OF

THE REV. ROBERT HALL, A. M.

Robert Hall, whose Works are collected in the volumes now published, was born at Arnsby, a village about eight miles from Leicester, on the 2d of May, 1764. His father was descended from a respectable family of yeomanry in Northumberland, whence he removed to Arnsby in 1753, on being chosen the pastor of a Baptist congregation in that place. He was not a man of learning, but a man of correct judgment, and solid piety, an eloquent and successful preacher of the gospel, and one of the first among the modern Baptists in our villages who aimed to bring them down from the heights of ultra-Calvinism to those views of religious truth which are sound, devotional, and practical. He was the author of several useful publications, of which one, the "Help to Zion's Travellers," has gone through several editions, and is still much and beneficially read, on account of its tendency to remove various often-urged objections against some momentous points of evangelical truth. He was often appointed to draw up the "Circular Letters" from the ministers and messengers of the Northampton Association. One of these letters, published in 1776, presents, in small compass, so able a defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, that it might be advantageously republished for more general circulation. This excellent man died in March, 1791. His character has been beautifully sketched by his son,* who, in one sentence, while portraying his father, with equal accuracy depicted himself:—"He appeared to the "greatest advantage upon subjects where the faculties of "most men fail them; for the natural element of his mind "was greatness."

* See Vol. IV. p. 262—267.

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The wife of this valuable individual was a woman of sterling sense and distinguished piety. She died in December, 1776.

Robert was the youngest of fourteen children, six of whom survived their parents. Four of these were daughters, of whom three are still living; the other son, John, settled as a farmer at Arnsby, and died in 1806.

Robert, while an infant, was so delicate and feeble, that it was scarcely expected he would reach maturity. Until he was two years of age he could neither walk nor talk. He was carried about in the arms of a nurse, who was kept for him alone, and who was directed to take him close after the plough in the field, and at other times to the sheep-pen, from a persuasion, very prevalent in the midland counties, that the exhalations from newly ploughed land, and from sheep in the fold, are salubrious and strengthening. Adjacent to his father's dwelling house was a burial ground; and the nurse, a woman of integrity and intelligence, judging from his actions that he was desirous to learn the meaning of the inscriptions on the grave-stones, and of the various figures carved upon them, managed, by the aid of those inscriptions, to teach him the letters of the alphabet, then to group them into syllables and words, and thus, at length, to read and speak. No sooner was his tongue loosed by this unusual but efficient process, than his advance became constantly marked. Having acquired the ability to speak, his constitutional ardour at once appeared. He was incessantly asking questions, and became a great and a *rapid* talker. One day, when he was about three years old, on his expressing disapprobation of some person who spoke quickly, his mother reminded him that *he* spoke very fast; "*No,*" said he, "*I only keep at it.*"

Like many others who were born in villages, he received his first regular instructions (after he left his nurse's arms) at a dame's school. Dame *Scotton* had the honour of being his first professional instructor. From her he was transferred to a Mrs. *Lyley*, in the same village. While under their care he evinced an extraordinary thirst for knowledge, and became a collector of books. In the summer season, after the school-hours were over, he would put his richly prized library, among which was an Entick's Dictionary, into his pinafore, steal into the grave yard, (which, from an early and

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fixed association, he regarded as his study,) lie down upon the grass, spread his books around him, and there remain until the deepening shades of evening compelled him to retire into the house.

At about six years of age he was placed, as a day-scholar, under the charge of a Mr. *Simmons*, of Wigston, a village about four miles from Arnsby. At first, he walked to school in the mornings and home again in the evenings. But the severe pain in his back, from which he suffered so much through life, had even then begun to distress him; so that he was often obliged to lie down upon the road, and sometimes his brother John and his other school-fellows carried him, in turn, he repaying them during their labour by relating some amusing story, or detailing some of the interesting results of his reading. On his father's ascertaining his inability to walk so far daily, he took lodgings for him and his brother at the house of a friend in the village: after this arrangement was made they went to Wigston on the Monday mornings, and returned to Arnsby on the Saturday afternoons.

The course of instruction at Mr. Simmons's school was not very extensive; and Robert was not likely to restrict himself, as a student, to its limits. On starting from home on the Monday, it was his practice to take with him two or three books from his father's library, that he might read them in the intervals between the school hours. The books he selected were not those of mere amusement, but such as required deep and serious thought. The works of Jonathan Edwards, for example, were among his favourites; and it is an ascertained fact, that before he was nine years of age, he had perused and reperused, with intense interest, the treatises of that profound and extraordinary thinker, on the "Affections," and on the "Will." About the same time he read, with a like interest, "Butler's Analogy." He used to ascribe his early predilection for this class of studies, in great measure, to his intimate association, in mere childhood, with a tailor, one of his father's congregation, a very shrewd, well-informed man, and an acute metaphysician. Before he was ten years old, he had written many essays, principally on religious subjects; and often invited his brother and sisters to hear him preach. About this time, too, in one of those anticipatory distributions of a father's property, which, I apprehend, are

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not unusual with boys, he proposed that his brother should have the cows, sheep, and pigs, on their father's death, and leave him "all the books." These juvenile "dividers of the inheritance" seem to have overlooked their sisters; unless, indeed, they assigned them the furniture. The incident, however, is mentioned simply to shew what it was that Robert even then most prized.

He remained at Mr. Simmons's school until he was eleven years of age, when this conscientious master informed the father that he was quite unable to keep pace with his pupil, declaring that he had been often obliged to sit up all night to prepare the lessons for the morning; a practice he could no longer continue, and must therefore relinquish his favourite scholar.

The proofs of extraordinary talent and of devotional feeling, which Robert had now for some time exhibited, not only gratified his excellent parents, but seemed to mark the expediency and propriety of devoting him to the sacred office; but the delicate health of the son, and the narrow means of the father, occasioned some perplexity. Mr. Hall, therefore, took his son to Kettering, in order that he might avail himself of the advice of an influential and valued friend residing there, Mr. Beeby Wallis. Their interview soon led to the choice of a suitable boarding school; but the pallid and sickly appearance of the boy exciting Mr. Wallis's sympathy, he prevailed upon his father to leave him at his house for a few weeks, in the hope that change of air would improve his health. This gentleman was so greatly astonished at the precocity of talent of his youthful visitor, that he several times requested him to deliver a short address to a select auditory invited for the purpose. The juvenile orator often afterwards adverted to the injury done him by the incongruous elevation to which he was thus raised. "Mr. Wallis," said he, "was one whom every body "loved. He belonged to a family in which probity, candour, "and benevolence, constituted the general likeness: but con- "ceive, Sir, if you can, the egregious impropriety of setting a "boy of eleven to preach to a company of grave gentlemen, full "half of whom wore wigs. I never call the circumstance to "mind but with grief at the vanity it inspired; nor, when I "think of such mistakes of good men, am I inclined to question "the correctness of Baxter's language, strong as it is, where "he says, 'Nor should men turn preachers as the river Nilus

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" breeds frogs (saith Herodotus), when one half *moveth* before " the other is *made*, and while it is yet *but plain mud!*'"*

Robert's health appearing much improved from his short residence at Kettering, he was placed by his father as a boarder, at the school of the Rev. *John Ryland*, in the neighbouring town of Northampton. Mr. Ryland was a very extraordinary man, whose excellencies and eccentricities were strangely balanced. In him were blended the ardour and vehemence of Whitfield, with the intrepidity of Luther. His pulpit oratory was of the boldest character, and singularly impressive, when he did not overstep the proprieties of the ministerial function. In his school he was both loved and feared; his prevailing kindness and benevolence exciting affection, while his stern determination to *do* what was right, as well as to *require* what he *thought* right, too often kept alive among his pupils a sentiment of apprehension and alarm. So far as I can learn, from several who had been under his care, he taught Greek better than Latin, and the rudiments of mathematical science with more success than those of grammar and the languages. His pupils never forgot his manner of explaining the doctrine and application of ratios and proportions; and they who had ever formed a part of his " living orrery," by which he incorporated the elements of the solar system among the amusements of the play-ground, obtained a knowledge of that class of facts which they seldom, if ever, lost.

Our youthful student remained under Mr. Ryland's care but little more than a year and a half; during which, however, according to his father's testimony, "he made great progress in Latin and Greek;" while, in his own judgement, the principle of emulation was called into full activity, the habit of composition was brought into useful exercise, the leading principles of abstract science were collected, and a thirst for knowledge of every kind acquired. It should also be mentioned here, that it was during the time Robert was Mr. Ryland's pupil, that he heard a sermon preached at Northampton, by Mr. *Robins*, of Daventry, whose religious instruction, conveyed " in language of the most classic purity," at once "impressive and delightful," excited his early relish for chaste and elegant composition.†

From the time he quitted Northampton, until he entered the " Bristol Education Society," or academy, for the instruction

* Saint's Rest, Preface to Part II. original edition. † See Vol. IV. p. 306.

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of young men preparing for the ministerial office among the Baptists, he studied divinity, and some collateral subjects, principally under the guidance of his father, with occasional hints from his acute metaphysical friend, still residing in the same village. Having, in this interval, given satisfactory proofs of his piety, and of a strong predilection for the pastoral office, he was placed at the Bristol Institution, upon Dr. Ward's foundation, in October 1778, being then in his fifteenth year. He remained there until the autumn of 1781, when the president of the institution reported to the general meeting of subscribers and friends, that "two pupils, Messrs Stennett and "Hall, had been continued upon Dr. Ward's exhibition, but "were now preparing to set out for Scotland, according to the "Doctor's will."

The Bristol Academy, when Mr. Hall first joined it, was under the superintendence of the Rev. Hugh Evans, who was shortly afterwards succeeded by his son, Dr. *Caleb Evans*, both as president of the institution, and as pastor of the Baptist church in Broadmead. The Rev. *James Newton*, was the classical tutor. Under these able men he pursued his studies with great ardour and perseverance. He became an early riser; and it was remarked in consequence, that he was often ready to attend the tutor for the morning lessons, before some of his fellow-students had commenced their preparation.

His sentiments at this time respecting his theological tutor, and the importance of his studies in general, may be gathered from the subjoined extracts from two letters to his father, both written before July 1780.

"Dr. Evans is a most amiable person in every respect: as a man, generous and open hearted; as a christian, lively and spiritual; as a preacher, pathetic and fervent; and, as a tutor, gentle, meek, and condescending. I can truly say that he has, on all occasions, behaved to me with the tenderness and affection of a parent, whom I am bound by the most endearing ties to hold in everlasting honour and esteem.

"Through the goodness of God, of whom in all things I desire to be continually mindful, my pursuits of knowledge afford me increasing pleasure, and lay open fresh sources of improvement and entertainment. That branch of wisdom in which, above all others, I wish and crave your assistance is *divinity*, of all others the most interesting and important. It is the height of my ambition, that, in some happy period of my life, my lot may be cast near you, when I may

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have the unspeakable pleasure of consulting, on different subjects, you, whose judgement I esteem not less than an oracle.

"We, poor, short-sighted creatures, are ready to apprehend that we know all things, before we know anything; whereas it is a great part of knowledge to know that we know nothing. Could we behold the vast depths of unfathomed science, or glance into the dark recesses of hidden knowledge, we should be ready to tremble at the precipice, and cry out—'Who is sufficient for these things?'"

The system of instruction at Bristol, comprehended not merely the learned languages and the rudiments of science, but a specific course of preparation for the ministerial office, including the habit of public speaking. Essays and theses on appropriate topics, were written and delivered, under the direction of the tutors: religious exercises were carefully attended to; and the students were appointed, in turn, to speak or preach upon subjects selected by the president. Among the books first put into Mr. Hall's hands to prepare him for these exercises, was Gibbons's Rhetoric, which he read with the utmost avidity, and often mentioned in after life, as rekindling the emotion excited by Mr. Robins's preaching, improving his sensibility to the utility as well as beauty of fine writing, and creating an intense solicitude to acquire an elegant as well as a perspicuous style. He was, therefore, more active in this department of academical labour than many of his compeers. Usually, however, after his written compositions had answered the purpose for which they were prepared, he made no effort to preserve them; but either carelessly threw them aside, or distributed them among his associates, if they expressed any desire to possess them. Some of these early productions, therefore, have escaped the corrosions of time. The only one which I have been able to obtain is an essay on "Ambition," in which there is more of the tumultuary flourish of the orator, than he would ever have approved after he reached his twentieth year. Nor was it correct in sentiment. The sole species of excellence recommended to be pursued was superiority of intellect; all moral qualities, as well as actions directed to the promotion of human welfare, being entirely overlooked.

Indeed, there is reason to apprehend that at this period of his life, Mr. Hall, notwithstanding the correctness and excellence of his general principles, and the regularity of his devotional habits, had set too high an estimate on merely intellectual

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attainments, and valued himself, not more perhaps than was natural to youth, yet too much, on the extent of his mental possessions. No wonder, then, that he should experience salutary mortification. And thus it happened. He was appointed, agreeably to the arrangement already mentioned, to deliver an address in the vestry of Broadmead chapel, on 1 Tim. iv. 10. "Therefore, we both labour and suffer "reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is "the Saviour of all men; specially of those that believe." After proceeding, for a short time, much to the gratification of his auditory, he suddenly paused, covered his face with his hands, exclaimed, "Oh! I have lost all my ideas," and sat down, his hands still hiding his face. The failure, however, painful as it was to his tutors, and humiliating to himself, was such as rather augmented than diminished their persuasion of what he could accomplish, if once he acquired self-possession. He was, therefore, appointed to speak again, on the same subject, at the same place, the ensuing week. This second attempt was accompanied by a second failure, still more painful to witness, and still more grievous to bear. He hastened from the vestry, and on retiring to his room, exclaimed, "If *this* does not humble "me, the devil *must* have me!" Such were the early efforts of him whose humility afterwards became as conspicuous as his talents, and who, for nearly half a century, excited universal attention and admiration by the splendour of his pulpit eloquence.

Our student spent the first summer vacation after his entering the Bristol institution, under the paternal roof at Arnsby; and, in the course of that residence at home, accompanied his father to some public religious service at Clipstone, a village in Northamptonshire. Mr. Hall, senior, and Mr. Beddome of Bourton, well known by his Hymns, and his truly valuable Sermons*, were both engaged to preach. But, the latter, being much struck with the appearance, and some of the remarks, of the son of his friend, was exceedingly anxious that *he* should preach in the evening, and proposed to relinquish his own engagement, rather than be disappointed. To this injudicious proposal, after resisting every importunity for some time, he at length yielded; and entered the pulpit to address an auditory of *ministers*, many of whom he had been accustomed

* See Vol. IV. p. 438—440.

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from his infancy to regard with the utmost reverence. He selected for his text, 1 JOHN i. 5, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" and, it is affirmed, treated this mysterious and awful subject with such metaphysical acumen, and drew from it such an impressive application, as excited the deepest interest.

On the arrival of the summer vacation, in 1780, he again visited Arnsby; and during the period he then remained at home, his father became fully satisfied that his piety was genuine, as well as that his qualifications for the office of a preacher were of a high order. He therefore expressed to many of his friends his desire that he should be "set apart to the sacred work." Solicitous not to be led aside from a correct judgement by the partiality of a father, he resolved that the church over which he was pastor, should judge of his son's fitness, and recognise their conviction by a solemn act. The members of the church, after cautious and deliberate inquiry, ratified the decision of the anxious parent, and earnestly and unanimously requested "that Robert Hall, Jun. might be set "apart to public employ."

"Accordingly," as the following extract from 'the Church-book' testifies, on the 13th of August, 1780, "he was ex-"amined by his father before the church, respecting his incli-"nation, motives, and end, in reference to the ministry, and "was likewise desired to make a declaration of his religious "sentiments. All which being done to the entire satisfaction "of the church,* they therefore set him apart by lifting up "their right hands, and by solemn prayer.

* As the words *church*, *deacon*, &c. when used by congregational dissenters, whether baptist, or pædobaptist, are employed in senses differing from what are current among episcopalians, I annex this brief note to prevent misconception.

Among the orthodox dissenters of the class just specified, a distinction is always made between a church and a congregation. A *congregation* includes the whole of an assembly collected in one place for worship, and may therefore comprehend not merely real christians, but nominal christians, and, it may be, unbelievers, who, from various motives, often attend public worship. The *church* is constituted of that portion of these, who, after cautious investigation, are believed, in the exercise of judgement and charity, to be real christians. It is regarded as the duty of such to unite themselves in fellowship with a church, and conform to its rules; and the admission is by the suffrage of the members of the respective *church*; its connected congregation having no voice in this matter. A christian church is regarded as a voluntary society, into which the members are incorporated under the authority of Christ, whose laws they engage to obey, for the important purposes of promoting the mutual improvement of those who compose

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"His father then delivered a discourse to him, from 2 Tim. "ii. 1. *Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is* "*in Christ Jesus.* Being thus sent forth, he preached in the "afternoon from 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. *The Lord Jesus shall be* "*revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming* "*fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that* "*obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—May the "Lord bless him, and grant him great success!"

It is worthy of observation that, on this solemn occasion, as well as when he preached at Clipstone, Mr. Hall selected texts of the class most calculated to elicit those peculiar powers for which he was through life distinguished.

In little more than a year after Mr. Hall had been thus publicly designated a preacher of the gospel, having pursued his studies at Bristol with great assiduity and corresponding success, he was, as already hinted, appointed to King's College, Aberdeen, on Dr. Ward's foundation. In his journey thither, he was accompanied by Mr. Joseph Stennett, the son of the late Rev. Dr. Stennett, and another student, Mr. John Pownall, still living. The two former of these had letters to the venerable Dr. Erskine of Edinburgh; and he again supplied them with introductions to two eminent individuals at Aberdeen. This appears from a letter sent by the doctor, 2d Nov. 1781, to Mr. Ryland of Northampton; from which, as it exhibits his view of the state of things at Aberdeen, at that period, I present a brief extract.

it, by an orderly discharge of religious duties, and of bringing others to the knowledge of the truth. Every such church of Christ is considered as an independent society, having a right to enjoy its own sentiments, to choose its own officers, maintain its own discipline, admit members, or expel them on persisting in conduct unworthy of the christian profession; without being controlled or called to an account by any others whatever.

Such a church, as a christian community, observes the Sacrament, or "Communion of the body and blood of Christ," at stated seasons; the members of other churches being admissible, with the consent of the members present, on any specific occasion.

The officers of such a church consist of bishops or presbyters (i. e. pastors), and deacons. The latter are not, as in the church of England, and among other episcopalians, an order of the clergy, but are *laymen*. They are chosen from among the members of the church, and their business is "to see that the table of the Lord, the table of the poor, and the table of the minister, be supplied." They attend to the secular concerns of the church, as a body, and to all that relates to the convenience of the society, in reference to their public meeting. In many societies, too, they assist the pastor in his general superintendence.

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"I had the pleasure of your letter by Messrs. Stennett and Hall last week. They appear to me pleasant young men, and I should have been happy to have had further opportunities of showing my regard to the children of so worthy parents, than their short stay here allowed. Though there are many excellent teachers at Aberdeen, and both they and the ministers are remarkable for purity of morals, I have some fears, from different accounts, that the general strain of preaching there is less evangelical than in several pulpits in Glasgow or Edinburgh. Principal Campbell and Dr. Beattie are, in my opinion, able and worthy men; and my difference with the first, as to the American War and the Popish Bill, has not impaired our mutual esteem. I wrote letters to introduce the young gentlemen to both."

Mr. Hall, for many years afterwards, used often to speak of the affectionate attentions of Dr. Erskine, on this occasion; and of his own feelings, when, on taking leave, the venerable man of God exhorted him to self-vigilance, kissed him, laid his hand upon his head, blessing him and commending him to the watchful care of the great Head of the Church.

At the time when he went to Aberdeen, the reputation of the two colleges, King's and Marischal College, was almost equally balanced. At the latter, Principal Campbell and Dr. Beattie, Professor of Moral Philosophy, had attained a high and merited celebrity both on account of their lectures and their writings: while at King's College, the Divinity lectures of Dr. Gerard were much and greatly esteemed; and some of the other professors were men of eminence. Many, therefore, especially of the divinity students, attended the appropriate lectures at the two colleges.*

Mr. Hall, in a letter addressed to his deservedly prized friend, the late Dr. Ryland, towards the end of this first session at college, speaks thus of his studies and of two of the professors:—

* At King's College, during Mr. Hall's studies there, Mr. John Leslie was Professor of Greek; Mr. Roderick Macleod, Professor of Philosophy, including Mathematics; Mr. W. Ogilvie, Professor of Humanity; Mr. James Dunbar, Professor of Moral Philosophy; and Dr. Alexander Gerard, Professor of Divinity. Though some of these were highly distinguished men, Dr. Gerard was most known to the world of English literature. Among his works are "An Essay on Genius," "An Essay on Taste," two volumes of valuable Sermons, and his "Lectures on the Pastoral Care," published in 1799 by his son, Dr. Gilbert Gerard.

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"We entered the Greek class under Mr. Leslie, who, though a man of no apparent brightness of parts, is, notwithstanding, well-fitted for his office, being a good grammarian, and attentive to the interests of his pupils. We have been employed in the class in going over, more accurately, the principles of the Greek language, and reading select passages in Xenophon and Homer: and I have privately read through Xenophon's Anabasis, and Memorabilia of Socrates, several books of Homer, and some of the Greek Testament; and am now reading *Longini de Sublimitate liber*, which I hope to finish next week."

In the same letter he mentions his reading with Professor Ogilvie, whose versions of the Latin poets he characterizes as "extremely elegant." He laments the want of religious advantages in this seat of learning, and deplores the profanity and profligacy of many of the students; one of whom, he assures his friend, affirmed that he knew no use even in the word "God," except to give point to an oath! To make up for this sad deficiency, he adds, "we have found some agreeable acquaintances in the New Town, and among them the sister of Mr. Cruden, the author of the Concordance."

The same letter contains evidence that he did not confine his attention solely to classical and mathematical studies. After expressing his admiration of the devotional as well as rational spirit that "lives and breathes in every page of Edwards," he adds:—

"My thoughts are at present too much immersed in literary exercises to admit of long or close application of thought to any thing else. I have, however, been thinking a little on the distinction of *natural* and *moral ability*, and have in my mind an objection upon which I should be glad to have your thoughts. It is, briefly, this: If, according to Edwards, the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding, and if it be determined, directed, and biassed by the view of the understanding, what room then is left for any notion of moral ability, as distinct from natural? or how can there, in this case, be any depravity of the will, without supposing a prior defect in the understanding? Since the will, if it be wrong in its bias, is first led to that bias by the understanding; and where then the possibility of a *moral inability* consisting with a *natural ability?* This I hope to have some conversation with you upon, when I have the happiness of seeing you. I have with me Edwards on the Will,

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and have lately perused it often ; and the more I read it, the more I admire."

The lamented death of Sir James Mackintosh has left a blank which none can adequately fill, with regard to Mr. Hall's character, habits, and the developement of his intellectual powers at this period. On application, however, to an esteemed friend, Professor Paul, he has kindly communicated a few particulars, which I shall give in his own language.

" What I now transmit is drawn from the College records, from the recollection of Dr. Jack, Principal of King's College, and formerly for three years a class-fellow of Mr. Hall, and from my own knowledge ; for I, also, was a cotemporary of Mr. Hall, having commenced my first year's studies when he commenced his fourth. It appears from the album that Mr. Hall entered college in the beginning of November, 1781. His first year was spent principally under the tuition of Mr. Professor Leslie, in the acquisition of the Greek language ; his second, third, and fourth years under that of Mr. Professor Macleod, when he studied mathematics, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy. He took his degree in arts (i. e. A. M. degree) on the 30th of March, 1785. Principal Jack says that he attended the Professor of Humanity, Mr. Ogilvie, during the four years he was at college, both for Latin and Natural History ; but, as there is no record of the students of the humanity and natural history classes, this fact depends wholly on the Principal's recollection. I learn from the same source that Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Hall, while at college, read a great deal of Greek in private, and that their reputation was high among their fellow-students for their attainments in that language. Principal Jack also bears testimony to Mr. Hall's great success in his mathematical and philosophical studies, and affirms that he was the first scholar of his class, in the various branches of education taught at college. During one of the sessions the Principal was member of a select literary society, consisting of only eight or ten students, of which society Sir James and Mr. Hall were the distinguished ornaments. None of Mr. Hall's college exercises are now to be found in this place ; but my impressions correspond with those of the Principal, that his acquirements were of the very first order ; and as Sir James had left college before I entered, having received his A. M. degree 30th March, 1784, there was no one at college in my time who could be at all put in competition with Mr. Hall. But, it was not as a scholar alone that Mr. Hall's reputation was great at college. He was considered by

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all the students as a model of correct and regular deportment, of religious and moral habits, of friendly and benevolent affections."

To this concise summary, I subjoin the few particulars which I gathered from Sir James Mackintosh himself.

When these two eminent men first became acquainted, Sir James was in his eighteenth year, Mr. Hall about a year older. Sir James described Mr. Hall, as attracting notice by a most ingenuous and intelligent countenance, by the liveliness of his manner, and by such indications of mental activity as could not be misinterpreted. His appearance was that of health, yet not of robust health; and he often suffered from paroxysms of pain, during which he would roll about on the carpet, in the utmost agony; but no sooner had the pain subsided than he would resume his part in conversation with as much cheerfulness and vivacity as before he had been thus interrupted. Sir James said he became attached to Mr. Hall, "because he could not help it." There wanted many of the supposed constituents of friendship. Their tastes, at the commencement of their intercourse, were widely different; and upon most of the important topics of inquiry, there was no congeniality of sentiment: yet notwithstanding this, the *substratum* of their minds seemed of the same cast, and upon this, Sir James thought, the edifice of their mutual regard first rested. Yet he, ere long, became fascinated by his brilliancy and acumen, in love with his cordiality and ardour, and "awe-struck" (I think that was the term employed) by the transparency of his conduct and the purity of his principles. They read together; they sat together at lecture, if possible; they walked together. In their joint studies, they read much of Xenophon, and Herodotus, and more of Plato; and so well was all this known, exciting admiration in some, in others envy, that it was not unusual, as they went along, for their class-fellows to point at them and say, "*There go Plato and Hērodōtus.*" But the arena in which they met most frequently was that of morals and metaphysics; furnishing topics of incessant disputation. After having sharpened their weapons by reading, they often repaired to the spacious sands upon the sea shore, and still more frequently to the picturesque scenery on the banks of the Don, above the old town, to discuss with eagerness the various subjects to which their attention had been directed. There was scarcely an important position in Berkeley's

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Minute Philosopher, in Butler's Analogy, or in Edwards on the Will, over which they had not thus debated with the utmost intensity. Night after night, nay, month after month, for two sessions, they met only to study or to dispute; yet no unkindly feeling ensued. The process seemed rather, like blows in that of welding iron, to knit them closer together. Sir James said, that his companion as well as himself often contended for victory, yet never, so far as he could then judge, did either make a voluntary sacrifice of truth, or stoop to draw to and fro the *serra λογομαχίας*, as is too often the case with ordinary controvertists. From these discussions, and from subsequent meditation upon them, Sir James learnt more *as to principles* (such, at least, he assured me, was his deliberate conviction) than from all the books he ever read. On the other hand, Mr. Hall through life reiterated his persuasion, that his friend possessed an intellect more analogous to that of Bacon, than any person of modern times; and that if he had devoted his powerful understanding to metaphysics, instead of law and politics, he would have thrown an unusual light upon that intricate but valuable region of inquiry. Such was the cordial, reciprocal testimony of these two distinguished men. And, in many respects—latterly, I hope and believe, in *all* the most essential—it might be truly said of both "as face answereth to face in a glass, so does the heart of a man to his friend."

It will be seen from the first of the series of letters inserted in the fifth volume,* that, shortly after Mr. Hall's return to Aberdeen in November, 1783, he received an invitation from the church at Broadmead, to associate himself with Dr. Caleb Evans, as the assistant pastor; an invitation which he accepted with much doubt and diffidence. After some correspondence it was arranged that Mr. Hall should reside at Bristol, in the interval (of nearly six months) between the college sessions of 1784 and 1785, and then return to Aberdeen to complete his course. In this important session, from the beginning of November 1784 to May 1785, he seems to have devoted himself most sedulously to his studies; especially the Greek language, with moral and intellectual philosophy, and those other departments of inquiry which are most intimately related to theology. During the session, too, he attended Dr. Campbell's lectures at Marischal college, and frequently profited by the Doctor's

* See Vol. V. p. 405.

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expository discourses, delivered once each fortnight; while he generally attended public worship at the church where Mr. Abercromby and Mr. Peters, both regarded as holding correct sentiments, were the alternate preachers. He had now lost his chosen companion, the sharpener of his faculties by animated yet friendly debate; and he sought for no substitute in society, but resolved to turn the deprivation into a benefit, by a more arduous application to his literary pursuits, and by cultivating habits of meditation. "I now," said he, in a letter to his father, "find retirement prodigiously sweet, "and here I am entirely uninterrupted and left to my own "thoughts." In this disposition he commenced and concluded the session.

By the time Mr. Hall had thus completed his academical course, his mental powers, originally strong, had attained an extraordinary vigour; and, with the exception of the Hebrew language, of which he then knew nothing, he had become rich in literary, intellectual, and biblical acquisition. On resuming his labours at Broadmead, in conjunction with Dr. Evans, his preaching excited an unusual attention, the place of worship was often crowded to excess, and many of the most distinguished men in Bristol, including several clergymen, were among his occasional auditors.

This popularity not only continued, but increased, until he removed to another sphere of action. The brilliancy and force of his eloquence were universally acknowledged, while, in private life, his instructive and fascinating conversation drew equal admiration. Yet it ought not to be concealed (for I simply announce his own deliberate conviction, frequently expressed in after-life) that at this time he was very inadequately qualified for the duties of a minister of the gospel. He had, it is true, firmly embraced and cordially relied upon those fundamental truths which are comprehended in the declaration,— "He that cometh unto God must believe that He *is*, and that "He is the *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him:" and he often expatiated, with much originality and beauty, upon the divine attributes, and constantly exhorted men to adhere closely to the path of duty; yet, not often from the higher, namely, the evangelical motives, to pure, and benevolent, and holy conduct. His knowledge of Christianity, as a system of restoration and reconciliation, was comparatively defective and

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obscure; and he felt but little alive to those peculiarities of the new dispensation, upon which, in maturer life, he loved to dwell. In his preaching he dealt too much in generalities, or enlarged upon topics, which, though in a certain sense noble and inspiring, and thus calculated to elevate the mind, did not immediately flow from the great scheme of redemption, which it was his especial office to disclose. The extent of God's matchless love and mercy—the depth of the mystery of his designs—the inexhaustible treasury of his blessings and graces—the wonderful benefits flowing from the incarnation, humiliation, and sacrifice of the Son of God—the delightful privileges of the saints,—were themes to which he recurred far less frequently than in later days; and he persuaded himself that this was not *very* wrong, because his colleague, Dr. Evans, who had "the care of the church," adverted so incessantly to the doctrines of our Lord's divinity and atonement, of spiritual influence and regeneration, as to leave room for *him* to explore other regions of instruction and interest.

It is possible that Mr. Hall, from his habit of self-depreciation, may have a little overcharged this picture: yet the notes of several of his sermons, preached from 1785 to 1789, taken down by one of the congregation, and which are now in my possession, confirm, to a considerable extent, the existence of the serious defect, which he subsequently so much deplored.

Considering his early age, twenty-one, it was manifestly unfavourable to the correct developement of his character *as a preacher*, that in August 1785, only three months after his quitting Aberdeen, he was appointed classical tutor in the Bristol Academy, on the resignation of Mr. Newton. That additional appointment he held for more than five years, and discharged its duties with marked zeal and activity, and with commensurate success. At this period of his life he was celebrated as a satirist, and would overwhelm such of his associates as tempted him to the use of those formidable weapons, with wit and raillery, not always playful. Aware, however, that this propensity was calculated to render him unamiable, and to give permanent pain to others, (a result which the generosity of his disposition made him anxious to avoid,) he endeavoured to impose a restraint upon himself, by writing the Essay on the "Character of Cleander;"* in which he exposes, with just severity, that

* See Vol. III. p. 459.

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species of sarcasm to which he believed himself most prone; and thus, by its publication, gave to others the opportunity, when he slid into this practice, of reproving him in his own language.

It seems to have been remarkably, and doubtless mercifully, overruled, that, during this period of Mr. Hall's history, though his more judicious and wise friends were often grieved by the free and daring speculations which he advanced in private, he never promulgated direct and positive error from the pulpit. And thus they who were filled with apprehension on account of sallies in conversation, would listen with delight to his public addresses. This will be evinced by a few extracts from the journals of two of his constant friends.

Mr. *Fuller* writes. "1784, May 7. Heard Mr. Robert Hall, jun., from 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' Felt very solemn in hearing some parts.—The Lord keep that young man!"

Again, "1785, June 14. Taken up with the company of Mr. Robert Hall, jun.; feel much pain for him. The Lord, in mercy to him and his churches in this country, keep him in the path of truth and righteousness."

In like manner, Dr. *Ryland*. "June 8, 1785. Robert Hall, jun. preached wonderfully from Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.' I admire many things in this young man exceedingly, though there are others that make me fear for him. O that the Lord may keep him humble, and make him prudent!"

Again, "June 15. Rode to Clipston to attend the ministers' meeting. R. Hall, jun. preached a glorious sermon, on the immutability of God, from James i. 17, 'The father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.'"

Again, "1786, June 13. Sent off a letter to Robert Hall, jun., which I wrote chiefly in answer to one of his some months ago, wherein he replied to mine concerning some disagreeable reports from Birmingham: added some new hints respecting another matter lately reported. O that God may keep that young man in the way of truth and holiness."

It hence appears, that Dr. Ryland, who was nearly twelve years older than Mr. Hall, and had known him from his childhood, did not rest satisfied with silent lamentations. This excellent man, fearing that his young friend was about to precipitate himself into a very dangerous course, sought by kind

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but strong expostulation to rescue him from the peril; and thus addressed him.

"My very dear Friend,

"The fullest consciousness that I have a right to call you so, as really feeling an earnest and tender concern for your welfare, and the recollection that you apparently allowed it when I last saw you, encourages me to write to you; though I may as well tell you at once that I am going to write to you in the same strain of complaint and censure which I have been constrained to use before. And indeed my fears and grief were never excited to such a degree concerning you as they now are. I still hope, however, you have much love to God; and I trust so much conviction of my sincere friendship, that you will not say of me as one said of Micaiah, 'I hate him, for he is always saying evil of me.' Indeed, the things that grieve me I shall industriously conceal from every body as long as I can; but I fear they will spread fast enough: for if you openly utter all your mind, there are not many who will mourn in secret over the report.

"It gave me extreme uneasiness to hear, this week, of the general disgust you had given to your former friends at Birmingham, on your last visit. Verily I wish that neither you, nor I, nor others, may fight for the truth with infernal weapons. I would wish to feel in my inmost soul the tenderest pity for the most erroneous men in the world, and to shew all proper respect to men of science, and men who are regular in their outward conduct. Nor should I at all approve of violent or harsh language, or like to speak my opinion of the state of individuals. But at the same time I cannot but think, that the lusts of the *mind* may as effectually ruin a man as 'the lusts of the *flesh*.' And I must get a good way toward Socinianism myself before I have any strong hope that a Socinian, living and dying such, will see the kingdom of God. When the merciful Jesus declared, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' &c. I cannot believe that he meant simply, that he shall be saved who believes *that Jesus was not an impostor*, and who believes the *Doctrine of the Resurrection*. But these two articles are, I believe, the whole of Dr. Priestley's Christianity, and if once I were to think this Christianity enough to carry a man to heaven, I should not, I fear, be very strenuous in my endeavours to convince men of the danger of self-righteousness, and the necessity of a reliance on the Atonement. Oh! my dear friend, can I conceive that your mind was deeply impressed with a sense of the divine purity and the justice of God's law, when you could utter so vain and vile a speech as this?"

The Doctor then cites the language imputed to Mr. Hall.

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It implied that if he were the Judge of all, he could not condemn Dr. Priestley. After animadverting strongly upon the phrase which he understood was actually employed, he proceeds thus:

"It is, I am sure, not malevolence, but sincere love, that makes me jealous of you. May the Lord keep you! I wish you would look over afresh the Epistle to the Galatians, and examine whether your charity is as chaste as Paul's. I allude to a proverb you have doubtless heard—'Charity is an angel, while she rejoiceth in the truth, a harlot when she rejoiceth in iniquity;'—embracing those whom she should rather pity and weep over.

"Study to enter into the very spirit of Paul's discourse, 1 Cor. i. 18—31, or Gal. ii. 15—21; and if this is consistent with supposing it would be unfair for God to punish any man for rejecting the Gospel, who understood chemistry and philosophy, why, then retain your favourable opinion of the safety of Socinians.

"Receive this as a proof of the affection with which I am

"Your faithful friend,

"J. Ryland."

Many high-spirited young men, we can readily imagine, would have treated such a letter as this with contempt; while others would have replied to it in a lofty tone of surprise and indignation. But Dr. Ryland's young friend, notwithstanding the errors into which his impetuosity had hurried him, had too much generosity to regard as insulting what he knew was dictated by affection; and therefore, anxious to shew that he could bear reproof, and be thankful for it, he promptly replied:

"My dear Friend,

"I have just received your letter, and think it of so much importance as to deserve an immediate answer. Accordingly, without the least delay, I have set myself to reply to it. I am exceedingly obliged to you for your friendly expostulation, because I know it is the effusion of a pious and benevolent heart that wishes me well. With respect to the conversation at Birmingham, to which you allude, I shall conceal nothing."

He then, at the same time that he denies the precise language that was imputed to him, states what he did really say; and aims to justify the sentiment which he had maintained: disclaiming, however, any approximation to Socinian doctrine.

"You seem to suspect I am far gone in Socinianism; but, in this, my dear friend, give me leave to say, you are utterly mistaken. Since I first began to reflect, I do not recollect a time

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when I was less inclined to Socinianism than at present. I can truly say, it would remove from me all my salvation and all my desire."

Again, reverting to the expression employed, he adds:—"Allowing it to be improper or too strong, I can only say, it does not belong to all to speak equally temperately; that the crime of expression can only be judged from the feelings, and that I am certain I did not *utter* it with any lightness of heart, but with deep feelings of earnestness and sincerity. Your charge of imprudence I cordially admit; and now see, with more clearness than I formerly did, that the imprudent should never come into company with the malicious.

"I had more to say; but have no room. I sincerely thank you for your letter, and shall always be extremely grateful for your correspondence, your good wishes, and your prayers.

"Believe me, as ever, affectionately yours,

"R. HALL, junior."

These letters would not have been inserted after the lapse of fifty years, but for the salutary lesson which they supply. If christian friendship always manifested itself in such fidelity as is here evinced, and uniformly experienced so kind and ingenuous a reception, what a different aspect, in a few years, would the christian world assume!

When Mr. Hall was about twenty-three years of age, he had an opportunity of hearing Mr. Robinson, his predecessor at Cambridge, preach; and was so fascinated with his manner, as to resolve to *imitate* it. But, after a few trials, he relinquished the attempt. The circumstance being afterwards alluded to, he observed, "Why, Sir, I was too proud to *remain* an imitator. "After my second trial, as I was walking home, I heard one of "the congregation say to another, 'Really, Mr. Hall *did remind* "us of Mr. Robinson!' That, Sir, was a knock-down-blow to "my vanity; and I at once resolved that if ever I *did* acquire "reputation, it should be my own reputation, belong to my own "character, and not be that of *a likeness*. Besides, Sir,* if I "had not been a foolish young man, I should have seen how "ridiculous it was to imitate such a preacher as Mr. Robinson. "He had a musical voice, and was master of all its intona-"tions; he had wonderful self-possession, and could say *what* "he pleased, *when* he pleased, and *how* he pleased; while my "voice and manner were naturally bad; and, far from having

* Mr. Hall very frequently repeated the word, *Sir*, in his conversation; especially if he became animated.

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" self-command, I never entered the pulpit, without omitting " to say something that I wished to say, and saying something " that I wished unsaid: and, beside all this, I ought to have " known that, for me *to speak slow was ruin.*" 'Why so?' " I wonder that you, a student of philosophy, should ask such " a question. You know, Sir, that force, or momentum, is " conjointly as the body and velocity; therefore, as my voice " is feeble, what is wanted in body must be made up in velo- " city, or there will not be, cannot be, any impression."

This remark, though thrown off hastily, in unreserved conversation, presents the theory of *one* important cause of the success of his rapid eloquence.

Shortly after this, Mr. Hall was, for the first time, in Mr. Robinson's society; I believe in London. Mr. Robinson was affluent in flatteries for those who worshipped him, while Mr. Hall neither courted flattery, nor scattered its incense upon others. In speaking of the Socinian controversy, the elder indulged in sarcasm upon " juvenile defenders of the faith," and made various efforts to " set the young man down," which tempted Mr. Hall to reply that " if *he* ever rode into the field " of public controversy, he should not borrow Dr. Abbadie's " *boots.*" This enigmatical retort* Mr. Robinson understood, and probably *felt* more than Mr. Hall had anticipated; for he had about that time quitted the field, put off " the boots," and passed to the verge of Socinianism. In the course of some discussions that followed, Mr. Hall, as most of those who were present thought, completely exposed the dangerous sophistry by which Mr. Robinson endeavoured to explain away some very momentous truths. Mr. Robinson, perceiving that the stream of opinion fell in with the arguments of his young opponent, and vexed at being thus foiled, lost his usual placidity and courtesy, and suddenly changed the topic of conversation, saying, " the company may be much better employed than by " listening to a raw school-boy, whose head is crammed with " Scotch metaphysics." Nothing but a consciousness that the " raw school-boy" had defeated him, would have thus thrown him off his guard.

* The allusion was to the defence of the divinity of our Lord, published in French, by Dr. Abbadie, in his " Vindication of the Truth of the Christian Religion;" a work from which Mr. Robinson was thought to have borrowed many of the arguments in his " Plea for the Divinity," &c. without acknowledgment.

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In 1788, Mr. Hall, weary of the solitude to which he was often subjected, as a mere lodger, and anticipating marriage in the course of a few months, (an anticipation, however, which was not realized), hired a house; his sister Mary, afterwards Mrs. James, kindly consenting to superintend his domestic concerns. From a letter which he then wrote to his father, I extract a few passages.

"*Feb. 10th*, 1788.

"We have a great deal of talk here about the slave-trade; as I understand from your letter, you have had too. A petition has been sent from hence to Parliament for the abolishing it; and a committee is formed to co-operate with that in London, in any measures that may be taken to promote their purpose. At Bristol much opposition is made by the merchants and their dependents, who are many, perhaps most of them, engaged in it. Our petition was signed by eight hundred, or upwards; which, considering that *no application has been made to any*, we think a great number. Many things have been written in the papers on both sides: some pieces I have written myself, under the signature *Britannicus*,* which I purpose to get printed in a few pamphlets, and shall send one of them to you. The injustice and inhumanity of the trade are glaring, and upon this ground I mainly proceed: upon the *policy* of abolishing it I treat lightly, because I am dubious about it; nor can it be of great consequence to the question in hand; for, if it be proved cruel and unjust, it is impious to defend it." . . . . . .

"I am afraid the abolition will not take place speedily, if at all. The trading and mercantile interest will make great outcry; the scheme will be thought chimerical, and after producing a few warm speeches, will, I fear, die away."

* * * * * *

"My own temper, I know, needs some correction, and it will be my daily endeavour to mend it: it wants *gentleness*. Mr. M—— has done me much good by convincing me, from his own example, to what perfection a temper naturally keen and lofty may be carried."

* * * * * *

"So far, I am happy that my duty and my gratification lie in the same direction: so that every step I take towards improvement may be a step towards real pleasure. One inconvenience, indeed, I labour under with respect to my temper, by being connected with my sister; and that is, *she never tries it.*"

* These I have not been able to procure. It would be curious to compare them with his more mature sentiments on the subject, so admirably exhibited in Vol. III. pp. 305—326.

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A serious trial of another kind, now, however, awaited Mr. Hall—a painful misunderstanding between him and his friend and colleague Dr. Evans. It continued not only to disturb the minds of both, but, as might be expected, to create partisans among their respective friends, and indeed to endanger the peace of the church at Broadmead, for more than two years. I have read various written papers, and some pamphlets, which relate to this painful affair; and cannot but conclude that, like many others, it originated in such trifling misconceptions, as, in more felicitous circumstances, neither party would have suffered to disturb his thoughts for an hour. A few hasty expressions, retorted by others both hasty and strong, tempted the Doctor and his friends to accuse Mr. Hall of ingratitude, and a want of deference to his superior in age and station; he, in his turn, repelled the accusation, in language too natural to a young man glowing with a lofty spirit of independence; and thus, new charges and fresh recriminations arose. The interposition of friends availed but little; for their unhallowed passions became ignited too. After many months spent in this unseemly strife, a meeting between the belligerent parties was held, in the presence of two friends of each, at the Mansion House, the Mayor of Bristol being one of the persons chosen by Dr. Evans. No beneficial effects resulted from this meeting; the individuals, who hoped by their interposition to ensure the restoration of amity, having long before ceased to be impartial judges in the affair. The parties on both sides, who were convened on this occasion, published their respective statements; from which it appears that one of them thought Mr. Hall justifiable, and censured Dr. Evans; while the other approved of the Doctor's conduct, and condemned that of Mr. Hall.

It will not, then, be expected, that I should draw from the obscurity which time has cast over them, more particulars relating to this unhappy collision. Nor, indeed, should I have adverted to it, had it not operated strongly in preparing Mr. Hall for his removal from Bristol. Whatever regret it might occasion him, on subsequent meditation, it excited no self-reproach, nor left any malevolent feeling. On the decease of Dr. Evans, which took place in 1791, his former colleague prepared an inscription for his monument; and he wrote the following letter to his brother-in-law, Mr. Isaac James, in reply to that which announced the Doctor's death.

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"*Cambridge, Aug.* 12, 1791.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"THE contents of your letter received this day have affected me more than almost any thing of the kind I ever met with in my life. It is in all points of view a most solemn event; but, from obvious circumstances, to *me* it cannot fail of being peculiarly so. It is truly affecting to recollect the friendship that so long subsisted betwixt us, and that it should end so unhappily in a breach that admits of no repair, no remedy!! Yet, though I feel most pungently upon this occasion, I am happy to be able to join with you in declaring that my conscience is not loaded with guilt. Abating too much of an unhappy violence, I have the *mens conscia recti*. Were the circumstances to occur again, a breach would, as before, be inevitable. But though, in justice to myself, I say thus much, there is no one more disposed to lament the deceased than myself, or who has a truer sensibility of the real virtues of his character. I have written to Mr. Higgs, and therefore I need say the less to you upon these melancholy topics. The chief purpose, indeed, of my troubling *you* at present, is to request you will be so kind as to give me the earliest and most particular account of every thing that passes at his funeral; the persons present, the sermon, the impression of the event, deep no doubt and awful, the whole state of things at Bristol, their future prospects and intentions, every thing relating to these matters that you know. The situation of the family and the church, though I doubt not I am the object of their joint abhorrence, I most sincerely compassionate. May God guide and comfort them. I think you and all my friends ought now to bury all that is past, and renew a connexion with the church, if their temper will permit you. My friends will *most oblige me* by carrying it respectfully to the Doctor's family and memory. 'Anger may glance into the bosom of a wise man, but it rests only in the bosom of fools;' and our best improvement of the death of this useful servant of God, will be to imitate his excellencies and forget his errors. Pray write as soon as possible. I shall be extremely impatient till I hear. I am, dear Brother,

"Your affectionate Brother,

"*To Mr. Isaac James.*" "R. HALL."

Before this time it was generally apprehended that Mr. Hall's sentiments had, on some momentous points, deviated considerably from the accredited standards of even moderate orthodoxy; and he had given much pain to some of his Baptist friends on account of his views with regard to re-baptizing. Some correspondence took place between him and the

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Broadmead Church, on these subjects: and, as well that the sentiments he then really held may be known, as that the extent of his declension into positive error, may be judged of from his own language, I shall here insert the frank exposition of his opinions, which he addressed to the church when he was on the eve of dissolving his connexion with it.

" *Thursday, Dec. 9th*, 1790.

" My dear Brethren,

" Every token of your respect and attachment sensibly affects me; and, as you have requested me to explain myself on those sentiments to which I alluded as reasons of separation, I think it a duty I owe to myself and to you to give you all the satisfaction in my power.

" 1st. In the first place, I am a firm believer in the proper divinity of Jesus Christ; in the merits of Christ as the sole ground of acceptance in the sight of God, without admitting works to have any share in the great business of Justification; and in the necessity of Divine influence to regenerate and sanctify the mind of every man, in order to his becoming a real Christian. Thus far in the affirmative.

" 2dly. In the second place, I am not a Calvinist, in the strict and proper sense of that term. I do not maintain the federal headship of Adam, as it is called, or the imputation of his sin to his posterity; and this doctrine I have always considered, and do still consider, as the foundation of that system. I believe we have received from our first parents, together with various outward ills, a corrupt and irregular bias of mind; but, at the same time, it is my firm opinion that we are liable to condemnation *only* for our own actions, and that *guilt* is a personal and individual thing. I believe in the doctrine of the Divine Decrees, and of course in the predestination of all events, of which the number of the finally saved is one. But this appears to me a different thing from the doctrine of absolute election and reprobation, as it has ever been explained by Calvinists, which does not meet my approbation. Without going into a large field of metaphysical discussion, this is all I think it requisite to say respecting my orthodoxy; but there are two other points which have occasioned a good deal of conversation, and from some quarters a good deal of censure; upon which I shall therefore beg leave to explain myself in a few words.

" 3dly. I am, and have been for a long time, a materialist, though I have never drawn your attention to this subject in my preaching: because I have always considered it myself, and wished you to consider it, as *a mere metaphysical speculation*. My opinion, however,

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upon this head is, that the nature of man is simple and uniform; that the thinking powers and faculties are the result of a certain organization of matter; and that after death he ceases to be conscious *until the resurrection.*"

* * * * * *

"Much has been said upon my opinions respecting Baptism, and I am happy to have this opportunity of explaining my sentiments on that subject in particular, as it affects not only the propriety of my former relation to this church, but of any future connexion I may form with any other christian society. On this point much mistake, much representation, I hope not voluntary, has taken place; and on this account I trust you will excuse my dwelling upon it a little more particularly than its importance in other respects might seem to justify. It has been held out to the world by some, that I am *not a Baptist.* I am, both in respect to the subject and to the mode of this institution, a Baptist. To apply this ordinance to infants appears to me a perversion of the intention of the sacred institution; and the primitive, the regular, and proper mode of administration, I take to be *immersion.* Still it appears to me that sprinkling, though an innovation, does not deprive Baptism of its essential validity, so as to put the person that has been sprinkled *in adult age* upon a footing with the unbaptized. The whole of my sentiments amounts to this, —I would not myself baptize in any other manner than by immersion, because I look upon immersion as the ancient mode, that it best represents the meaning of the original term employed, and the substantial import of this institution; and because I should think it right to guard against the spirit of innovation, which in positive rites is always dangerous and progressive: but I should not think myself authorized to re-baptize any one who has been sprinkled in adult age. I shall only remark, in addition to what I have already said upon this point, that if it be a sufficient objection to my union with a Baptist congregation; then, as all Christendom is composed of Baptists or Pædobaptists, it amounts to my exclusion, as a minister, from every christian society throughout the whole earth: an interdict equally absurd and inhuman, founded upon a conduct merely negative in chimerical situations seldom or never likely to occur.

"I have thus, in compliance with your wishes, and with all the perspicuity in my power, in a few words explained to you my religious opinions, with a more particular view to the subjects on which I may be supposed most to err: and this avowal I have made, partly as a testimony of the respect I bear you, and partly to vindicate my character from any suspicion of ambiguity or reserve; but not at all with the remotest wish to win popularity or to court your

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suffrages; for at present it is as little in my power to accept any invitation to continue, as it may be in your inclination to give it, as I hold myself engaged in honour as a probationer for six months to a respectable society at Cambridge. May peace and prosperity attend you. "I am, your Friend and Brother,

"With the greatest respect,

"R. HALL."

The vexations and perplexities in which Mr. Hall had been for some time involved, doubtless facilitated his removal to another sphere of action. And he who duly meditates upon the way in which the great Head of the Church renders the movements of his providence subservient to his merciful purposes in Redemption, will, I am persuaded, trace the superintending hand on this occasion.

Mr. Robinson, the pastor of the church at Cambridge, with which Mr. Hall was now about to be connected, was a man of extensive powers, of some genius, and of considerable industry and research. Fascinating as a preacher, delightful as a companion, perseveringly skilful in the insinuation of his sentiments, his influence could not but be great. From the profession of orthodox opinions, he had passed by a rather rapid transition, not to Socinianism, but far beyond, to the very borders of infidelity; such, at least, was the substance of his declaration to Dr. Priestley, whom he *thanked* for preserving him from that awful gulf. Vain speculation was substituted for knowledge, faith, and experience; confession, and prayer, but seldom made a part of the public worship which he conducted, his effusions before sermon consisting almost altogether of ascriptions of praise; and the congregation became so transformed and deteriorated, in consequence, that, among the more intelligent classes, with only two or three exceptions, "he was esteemed the best christian who was most skilled in disputation," not he who evinced most of "the spirit of Christ." The majority of the poorer members, however, escaped the contagion, and were ready to cooperate with the late Mr. Foster, who was then the senior deacon, and another of the deacons, who equally deplored the evils which had fallen upon them. Cordially attached to those doctrines which they regarded as fundamental, and therefore as constituting the basis of church union, they were preparing to call upon the whole body to consider the expediency of requesting Mr. Robinson to resign, when his sudden death at Birmingham, just after he had been

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preaching in Dr. Priestley's pulpit, rendered such a measure unnecessary. On the news of this event reaching Cambridge, Mr. Foster, who was then on his death-bed, made it his last request to some of the most influential men in the church, that they would never consent to the appointment of a Socinian as Mr. Robinson's successor.

From this account of the state of the church at Mr. Robinson's decease, it will appear how difficult it was to select a successor who would be approved by all; how difficult, also, for that successor to walk steadily in the path of duty.

Mr. Hall, who by this time had attained a high reputation as a preacher, was invited, in June or July 1790, to preach at Cambridge for one month; after which the invitation was renewed for a longer term. In July the following year, he was invited to take the pastoral charge: the letter, announcing his acceptance of the important trust, is already before the public.*

In these transactions and their consequences *still* unfolding, the wisdom and mercy of God are strikingly manifested. There was at that time no man of eminence among the Baptists, besides Mr. Hall, who could for a moment have been thought of by the church at Cambridge as a fit successor to Mr. Robinson; nor was there any Baptist church and congregation with which *he* could become connected, with the same prospect of being useful and happy, according to the views he then entertained. Had Mr. Hall's religious principles and feelings been such in 1790 and 1791, as they became a few years afterwards, not even *his* talents would have made them palatable; and a connexion, had it been formed, would soon have been dissolved: on the other hand, had the church been decidedly and entirely socinianized, he could not conscientiously have become its pastor. The providential correlation soon began to shew itself. *Their* looseness of sentiment on many points, which even then he thought momentous, led him to enforce them frequently with the utmost energy; while *his* known freedom of opinion on other points, which they also had been led to canvass freely, preserved him from the odium of orthodoxy. Thinking themselves liberal and unshackled, they could not but congratulate one another that their new pastor, a man of splendid talents, was *almost* as liberal and unshackled as they were. Then again, their want of devotional seriousness, by the force of contrast, heightened

* See Vol. V. p. 409.

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his estimate of the value of true piety; and this produced an augmented earnestness and fidelity, which they first learnt to tolerate, and afterwards to admire. Thus, by the operation of an incessant action and re-action, continued for years, each party exerted a salutary influence on the other; and at length both church and pastor became so distinguished for piety, harmony, and affection, that they, who had known and lamented their former state, were compelled to exclaim, "This hath God wrought."

The death of Mr. Hall's father, which occurred in March 1791, had indeed tended greatly to bring his mind to the state of serious thought with which he entered upon the pastoral office. Meditating with the deepest veneration upon the unusual excellencies of a parent now for ever lost to him, he was led to investigate, with renewed earnestness, the truth as well as value of those high and sacred principles, from which his eminent piety and admirable consistency, so evidently flowed. He called to mind, too, several occasions on which his father, partly by the force of reason, partly by that of tender expostulation, had exhorted him to abandon the vague and dangerous speculations to which he was prone. Some important changes in Mr. Hall's sentiments resulted from an inquiry conducted under such solemn impressions; and among these may be mentioned his renunciation of *materialism*, which he often declared he "buried in his father's grave."

Attentive to the voice of heavenly admonition, thus addressing him from various quarters, he entered upon his new duties with earnest desires that he might be able "to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Feeling that to him was consigned the charge of transforming, with God's assistance, a cold and sterile soil into a fruitful field, he determined not to satisfy himself with half measures, but proceeded to expose error, and defend what he regarded as essential truth. The first sermon, therefore, which he delivered at Cambridge, after he had assumed the office of pastor, was on the doctrine of the atonement, and its practical tendencies. Immediately after the conclusion of the service, one of the congregation, who had followed poor Mr. Robinson through all his changes of sentiment, went into the vestry, and said, 'Mr. Hall, this preaching won't do for us: it will only suit a congregation of old women.' "Do you mean my sermon, Sir, or

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the doctrine?" 'Your *doctrine*.' "Why is it that the *doctrine* is fit only for old women?" 'Because it may suit the musings of people tottering upon the brink of the grave, and who are eagerly seeking comfort.' "Thank you, Sir, for your concession. The doctrine will not *suit* people of *any* age, unless it be true; and if it *be true*, it is not fitted for old women alone, but is equally important at *every* age."

This individual, and three or four other men of influence, with about twenty from the poorer classes, shortly afterwards withdrew from the congregation, and met together on the Sunday evenings at a private house. The then Rev. William Frend, fellow and tutor of Jesus College, an avowed Socinian, became their religious instructor. This separate assembly, however, did not continue many months; for the person at whose house they met, was, ere long, taken up and tried for sedition, and convicted; and the proceedings against Mr. Frend, on account of his pamphlet entitled "Peace and Union," which for so long a time kept the University of Cambridge in a state of great agitation, and which ended in his expulsion from it, drew away his attention from the little band of seceders.

Mr. Hall's ministerial labours, at this interesting period of his life, were blessed with the happiest results, when the benefit seemed likely to be for a while suspended, by the intrusion of *violent* political discussion. The impression made throughout Europe by the French revolution of 1789, was such, that not merely here and there an individual indulged in political speculation, but almost every man threw himself into the vortex of controversy. The clergy of every order and station, the laity of every rank and class, yielded alike to the impulsion; and he who did not declare his decided and cordial adhesion to one or other of the contending parties, might expect the censure of both, for his want of spirit or of principle. Cambridge, hitherto characterized as the whig university, was, at this epoch, split into the most violent party divisions, and the public was deluged with sermons from the pulpit, and pamphlets from the press, in which the respective advocates of "things as they are," and of "things as they should be," defended their opposite views with the utmost zeal, and too often with the most unbecoming rancour.

At such a season Mr. Hall, then under thirty years of age, was not likely to maintain an entire silence. When a man's

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quiescence was sufficient to render his principles equivocal, *he* was certainly not one who would make a secret of his opinions. He thought that political ethics had almost ceased to be referable to any principle of pure ethics. He hesitated not to avow that the grand object of all good government must be to promote the happiness of the governed, to assist every individual in its attainment and security. He regarded a government chiefly anxious about the emoluments of office, or aiming to consolidate its own power at home and to aid the efforts of despots abroad, while it neglected the comfort and welfare of individuals in middle or lower life, whose burdens it augmented by a mistaken course, as a government that should be *constitutionally* opposed by every lawful means.

He gave to such subjects, also, more than political considerations. He looked upon those European governments which were founded on oppression, and trampled on the natural rights of man, as operating most fatally in the extinction of light and virtue. He regarded the conditions of those who tyrannize, and of those who are the objects of tyranny, as each productive of a numerous and distinct class of vices; and thought that the consequent darkness, ignorance, and criminality of the general mass under despotic governments, in great measure, if not entirely, incapacitated them for the pure and elevated enjoyments of heaven. It was hence a permanent conviction of his mind, "that he who is instrumental in perpe-
"tuating a corrupt and wicked government, is also instrumental
"in unfitting his fellow-men for the felicity of the celestial
"mansions*." Could it then be matter of surprise that, believing and feeling all this, he should exult when "the empire of darkness and of despotism had been smitten with a stroke which sounded through the universe;" or, when other ministers of the gospel were signalizing themselves by opposing this view of things, that he should, for a short interval, be drawn aside from pursuits more congenial with his prevailing tastes, and, in some important respects, I think, more compatible with his holy calling, and at once endeavour to prove that "christianity is consistent with a love of freedom," and that true christianity will prevail most where genuine freedom is most diffused and best understood?

Cordial, however, as was Mr. Hall's attachment to a cause

* See the splendid passage in Vol. III. p. 57—60.

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in which he conceived man's best interests to be closely interwoven, and strong as was his hatred of despotic measures, or what he regarded as such, either at home or abroad, I do not think that even their joint operation would have overcome his repugnance to writing, had it not been for skilful *abettors*, who first worked upon his feelings, and then extorted from him the promise of preparing a work for the public. Such, if I have not been misinformed, was the origin of his first political pamphlet; and such, I know, from his own declaration, often repeated, was the origin of the eloquent and powerful "Apology for the Freedom of the Press." The evening after the event occurred, to which he alludes in the "Apology *," he attended a periodical meeting of a Book-society, constituted principally of members of his own congregation, and of Mr. Simeon's, and usually denominated *Alderman Ind's Club*, that distinguished ornament of Mr. Simeon's congregation being the treasurer. Every person present expressed himself in terms of the strongest indignation at the insult offered to Mr. Musgrave; every one thought it highly desirable that some man of talent *at Cambridge* should advocate the principles maintained by the friends of liberty, especially of those who avowed evangelical sentiments, and the necessity for their united activity, in the present state of the country and of Europe. Mr. Hall spoke as decidedly as any of them with regard to the urgent necessities of the case; when they all, having brought him precisely into the position at which they were aiming, exclaimed, that it was he to whom alone they could look in this exigency. "Alderman Ind, you know, Sir, (said he,) was an excellent "man; pure as a seraph, and gentle as a lamb. I thought "that if *he* felt roused, if *he* could join with the rest in urging "me, I might bring all hesitation to a truce; and so, in an evil "hour, I yielded to their entreaties. I went home to my "lodgings, and began to write immediately; sat up all night; "and, wonderful for me, kept up the intellectual ferment for "almost a month; and then the thing was done. I revised it "a little as it went through the press; but I have ever since "regretted that I wrote so hastily and superficially upon some "subjects brought forward, which required touching with a "master-hand, and exploring to their very foundations. So "far as I understand the purely political principles which are

* See Note in Vol. III. p. 101.

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"advanced in that pamphlet, they are, I believe, correct: at "all events they are mine still. But, I repeat it, I yielded in "an evil hour; especially if I had any wish to obtain perma- "nent reputation as a political writer. Perhaps, however, the "pamphlet had its use in those perilous times." Such was Mr. Hall's account of this publication. How far it indicates the spirit of self-depreciation, in which, almost through life, he characterised his own productions, they who are best acquainted with the "Apology" will be most competent to decide; unless, indeed, their prepossessions and prejudices should disqualify them for deciding aright.

But, whatever might be Mr. Hall's opinion of this work, it does not seem to have been regarded by the public as of little value. Three editions were called for, I believe, within less than six months; and then, the author not sanctioning a republication, various editions were printed and circulated surreptitiously. Its more splendid and impressive passages were repeatedly quoted in the periodicals of the day, and many of its arguments were cited as perfectly conclusive. It was also widely circulated in America; and is there still regarded as having been powerfully influential in diffusing those liberal political principles which, of late, have acquired so marked an ascendency in Britain.

Mr. Hall, however, experienced such inconveniences from his political celebrity, as induced him to recede, not from his principles, or from the avowal of them in private, but from the farther advocacy of them in public. It forced upon him the society of men whose conduct and character he could not approve; it tended to draw him, much more than he could conscientiously justify, from retirement and study; and thus, ere long, he became of opinion, to adopt his own words, "that "the christian ministry is in danger of losing something of its "energy and sanctity, by embarking on the stormy element of "political debate." His elegant eulogium on Dr. Priestley,* in his first pamphlet, and the warm terms of admiration in which he used to speak of him in private, tempted many to fancy and to say, that he, also, was a Socinian at heart; and although his preaching became more and more distinguished by the introduction and energetic application of evangelical truth, he still found himself often so equivocally placed, as to render

* See Vol. III. p. 28—32.

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his denial of Socinianism quite imperative. On one of these occasions, Mr. Hall having, in his usual terms, panegyrized Dr. Priestley, a gentleman who held the Doctor's theological opinions, tapping Mr. Hall upon the shoulder with an indelicate freedom from which he recoiled, said, "Ah! Sir, we shall "have *you* among us soon, I see." Mr. Hall, startled and offended by the rude tone of exultation in which this was uttered, hastily replied, "*Me* amongst *you*, Sir! *me* amongst "*you!* Why, if that were ever the case, I should deserve to be "tied to the tail of the great red dragon, and whipped round "the nethermost regions to all eternity!"

Notwithstanding the reasons Mr. Hall thus had for some degree of reserve, yet in this, as in every period of his life, he displayed a remarkable relish for social intercourse. He did not court the society of literary men; indeed, he rather shrunk from it, because he felt the risk of having his thoughts too much engrossed by mere matters of language or of science: he had acquired enough of both to value them greatly; yet he desired to regard them principally as subservient to the higher purposes of his profession. Besides this, the philosophy of mind, in which he took extreme interest, was then but little cultivated at Cambridge. Happily, however, the leading individuals in his congregation were very intelligent and well-informed, able to appreciate his talents justly, and skilful in bringing his conversational powers into full action. With one or other of these he usually spent his evenings, selecting most frequently those who possessed the enjoyments of domestic life, and often stealing in earlier than he was expected, that he might for an hour, share in the gambols and gaiety of the children.

He was, but only for a short time, an imitator of Dr. Johnson. Some years afterwards, when reminded of this, he replied—"Yes, Sir: I aped Johnson, and I preached Johnson; and I "am afraid with little more of evangelical sentiment than is to "be found in his Essays: but it was youthful folly, and it was "very great folly. I might as well have attempted to dance "a hornpipe in the cumbrous costume of Gog and Magog. My "puny thoughts could not sustain the load of the words in "which I tried to clothe them."

There needed not, in truth, the principle of imitation, to produce great similarity in some important respects between these two extraordinary men. They manifested the physical

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difference between a melancholic and a cheerful temperament; in consequence of which, the one was slow and measured in utterance, the other rapid and urgent. But, in conversation, both evinced a ready comprehension of the whole subject, a quick and decisive accuracy in answering, and a perfect self-dependence. They both disliked a protracted debate, and would sometimes terminate a discussion, when it was growing tiresome, by a strong and pointed observation which it was difficult to encounter. Both were alike in exhibiting a rather more than ordinary degree of faith in things of a preternatural or mysterious description. In both, too, there were the similarities of acute intellect united with splendid imagination; and of a natural majesty of mental and moral genius which commanded veneration. But, in the correction of his faults, and the improvement of his virtues, Mr. Hall possessed, in his superior piety, an immense advantage over Dr. Johnson.

In argument he was impetuous, and sometimes overbearing; but if he lost his temper he was deeply humbled, and would often acknowledge himself to blame. On one of these occasions, when a discussion had become warm, and he had evinced unusual agitation, he suddenly closed the debate, quitted his seat, and, retiring to a remote part of the room, was overheard by a lady who was just entering, to ejaculate with deep feeling, "Lamb of God! Lamb of God! calm my perturbed spirit!"

Mr. Hall's personal habits, not only at the time of which I am now speaking, but in a certain degree through life, though not precisely those of an absent man, were those of one whose mental occupations kept his thoughts at a distance from various matters of ordinary observance, and made him regardless of a thousand things which most persons never forget. Thus on his return from an evening visit, if not watched, he would take a wrong hat or great coat;—if not sought after by some of the congregation, he would mistake the proper evening of a week-day service, having in such cases been so absorbed in study, as to lose a day in his reckoning;—for the same reason, he often mistook the day or the hour of an appointment;—when on any of his journeys to London he engaged to take up the letters of his friends, it was not unusual, after his return, to find them all in his portmanteau, or in his great-coat pocket. These, or similar instances of forgetfulness, occurred daily; but,

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exciting the attention of his affectionate and watchful friends, they seldom exposed him to serious inconvenience.

None of these peculiarities sprung from an affectation of singularity; they simply marked an inattention to things of minor importance. Nor was there united with them a regardlessness of the proprieties of society, a disdain of such civilities and attentions as were usual in the classes with whom he most associated. He had never aimed to acquire a facility in the manners and habits of genteel life; but he had a native ease and grace, which was obviously distinguishable from any acquired habit. It was a grace that could neither be bought nor borrowed; on all proper occasions heightened by the dignity which naturally comported with his character and office; and uniformly blended with that genuine simplicity which often accompanies intellectual greatness, and is always, if I mistake not, an attribute of moral greatness.

Several particulars in the preceding account of Mr. Hall's first years at Cambridge, will be illustrated by the following brief sketch, which I have received from a gentleman who had the most favourable opportunities, as well as the requisite taste and discrimination, for correctly estimating his character.

"I had but a slight acquaintance with Robert Hall from 1790 to 1793: from thence to the end of 1796, I knew him intimately. At that period his creed was imperfect, wanting the personality of the Holy Spirit, and wavering between the terrors of Calvin and the plausibilities of Baxter.* His infirmities, which were increasing, he concealed with dexterity, opposed with vigour, and sustained with uncommon patience. In his ministerial situation he was far from easy; and he was vehemently severe upon Robinson for leaving his church a wilderness, and bequeathing his successor a bed of thorns.

"His religious conversation in company was not frequent, and for the most part doctrinal; but, in private, his experimental communications were in beauty, elevation, and compass, beyond all I ever heard. The memory of a man of seventy-three will not afford particulars; and the general impression can neither be obliterated nor expressed.

"In his manners he was a close imitator of Dr. Johnson; fond of tea-table talk, and of the society of cultivated females, who had the taste to lend him an ear, and the ability requisite to make attention a favour. He has confessed to me the taking thirty cups of

* This phraseology will mark the bias of my truly respected correspondent.

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tea in an afternoon, and told me his method was to visit four families and drink seven or eight cups at each.

"He knew, as well as any man, what bad men were, and what good men should be; yet was often wrong in his judgement of individuals. From this deficiency in the knowledge of mankind, he sometimes trusted his false, and abused his true friends: when he perceived his error he changed his conduct, but, I suspect, very seldom confessed his mistake.

"He did not, then, read much; but was probably more hindered by pain than by indolence. A page, indeed, was to him more serviceable than a volume to many. Hints from reading or discourse, passing through his great mind, expanded into treatises and systems, until the adopted was lost in the begotten; so much so, that the whole appeared original. I am persuaded, however, that when I knew him he had not, by many degrees, attained his meridian. I should regret my incapacity to do him justice, and give you assistance, were I not persuaded that only the bud was exhibited to me, while the bloom and the fruit were reserved for those more deserving to be happy."

I had the privilege of becoming first known to Mr. Hall in January 1797. During that year we dined daily at the same table: the next year we met almost every morning to read together: and for some years afterwards scarcely a week passed in which I was not three or four times in his society. When I first became acquainted with him I was young, and ignorant of nearly every thing but the most rudimental knowledge of language and science; of which I possessed just enough to employ as instruments of inquiry. I was eager to acquire information; but ran some risk of turning my mind to that which was useless, or merely shewy, instead of directing its best energy to that which was truly valuable. In such circumstances to be allowed the friendship, and enjoy the advice and assistance of such a man, was among my richest blessings. Scarcely a thought worth preserving, scarcely a principle of action worth reducing to practice, scarcely a source of true enjoyment, but I derived from him, or I was led to receive, or to appreciate more correctly through his agency. If, then, for some pages, my name should occur more often in immediate association with that of my beloved and revered friend, than may seem consistent with ordinary rules, may I be freed from the charge of egotism? especially, if I assure the reader, that while nothing affords me more pleasure, nothing awakens more gratitude to

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the Father of Mercies, than the retrospect of the intellectual and higher than intellectual delights which were then mine, few things more humble me than the conviction that though I enjoyed them so long, I suffered them to pass away without commensurate improvement.

Mr. Hall kindly admitted me to the privacy of his study, in addition to the advantage of frequent intercourse with him in the society of his friends. Desirous to assist others in forming their estimate of this extraordinary individual, I shall not merely speak of his character, habits, and pursuits, but occasionally introduce some of his conversational remarks; confining myself, however, to such as from their brevity always occur to my thoughts in the *ipsissima verba* originally employed. If I do not succeed in depicting the man, which, indeed, I feel conscious is far beyond my powers, I may at least attempt to describe him as he then appeared to me.

When I first saw Mr. Hall, I was struck with his well-proportioned athletic figure, the unassuming dignity of his deportment, the winning frankness which marked all that he uttered, and the peculiarities of the most speaking countenance I ever contemplated, animated by eyes radiating with the brilliancy imparted to them by benevolence, wit, and intellectual energy. When he spoke, except in the most ordinary chit-chat, to which, however, he seldom descended, he seemed not merely to communicate his words, but himself: and I then first learnt the difference between one who feels while he is speaking, and whose communicative features tell you that he does, and one who after he has spoken long and with apparent earnestness, still does not feel. I then learnt also, that, though talents may convey their results to others, and activity may carry on others in its stream; yet there is something distinct in the structure of a great mind which never can be so transferred to another as to become its native characteristic. Mr. Hall had a buoyancy and playfulness when among his select friends, which were remarkably captivating. Among strangers there was a reserve for a short time, but it was soon shaken off, especially if he found that they were pious or intelligent. The presence of a man who gave himself airs of condescension, usually induced him to remain silent or to retire. He could enjoy the society of men of moderate information; and it was interesting to observe, how by a few apt questions he would ascertain in what direction their

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pursuits lay, and then so draw them out as to give them the pleasure of feeling that they were contributing to *his* stock of that knowledge which they could not but think useful. He was eminently alive to the emotions of pity, an affection always calculated to inspire attachment, but which in a man of abstract habits is, I fear, very unusual. He was generous by nature, as well as upon principle, and in seasons of affliction would remarkably identify himself with those who most needed sympathy. He rather avoided, than sought, expressions of thankfulness; and sometimes when he became oppressed by them, would hastily say, "Thank you, thank you; you have said "more than enough: remember, God has sent into the world a "more powerful, and more noble sentiment, than even gratitude."

For some years, he made it a rule to pay a pastoral visit to every member of his church, once each quarter. He did the same, also, with regard to such of his ordinary hearers as he thought willing to receive him as a minister of religion. These were not calls, but *visits*, and usually paid on evenings, that he might meet the whole assembled family. Among the lower classes, to make them quite at their ease, he would sit down with them at supper; and, that this might involve them in no extra expense, he took care they should all know that he preferred a bason of milk.*

He persuaded the poorer members of his church to form little meetings, for reading, religious conversation, and prayer, going "from house to house." These were held once a fortnight, I think, in the summer time; once a week during the winter. He made it a point of official duty to attend them frequently; and regarded them, with the weekly meetings in the vestry, as the best thermometer for ascertaining the religious state of his people.

Proceeding thus, it was not surprising that he conciliated the affections of his friends, and secured the veneration of the pious; that he extended around him a growing conviction of his excellency, and carried on many in the stream of his mental and moral power.

* The poorer widows of his flock were not forgotten in these periodical visits. To them, he said, he repaired for religious instruction, and was seldom disappointed. On such occasions he selected his ever favourite repast of *tea*. It was his practice to carry tea and sugar with him, taking especial care that there should be more than could possibly be needed, and asking permission to leave the remainder behind him.

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In him all was at the utmost remove from gloom or moroseness. Even the raillery in which he indulged, shewed his good nature, and was exceedingly playful; and, notwithstanding the avowed and lamented impetuosity in argument to which he was prone, nothing, so far as I ever saw, but conceit, engrafted upon stupidity, provoked his impatience, and called forth a severity which he scarcely knew how to restrain.* With regard to disposition, the predominant features were kindness and cheerfulness. He never deliberately gave pain to any one, except in those few extreme cases, where there appeared a moral necessity of "rebuking sharply" for the good of the offender. His kindness to children, to servants, to the indigent, nay, to animals, was uniformly manifest. And such was his prevailing cheerfulness that he seemed to move and breathe in an atmosphere of hilarity, which, indeed, his countenance always indicated, except when the pain in his back affected his spirits, and caused his imagination to dwell upon the evils of Cambridgeshire scenery.

This was, in his case, far from a hypothetical grievance. It seriously diminished his happiness at Cambridge, and, at length, was the main cause of his quitting it. In one of my early interviews with him, before I had been a month at that place, he said to me "What do you think of Cambridge, Sir?" 'It is a very interesting place.' "Yes, the place where Bacon, and Barrow, and Newton studied, and where Jeremy Taylor was born, cannot but be *interesting*. But that is not what I mean; what do you say to the scenery, Sir?" 'Some of the public buildings are very striking, and the college walks very pleasing; but—' and there I hesitated: he immediately added—"but there is nothing else to be said. What do you think of the surrounding country, Sir? Does not it strike you as very insipid?" 'No, not precisely so.' "Aye, aye: I had forgotton; you come from a flat country; yet you *must* love hills; there are no hills

* The following is an instance of his manner of checking inordinate vanity. A preacher of this character having delivered a sermon in Mr. Hall's hearing, pressed him, with a disgusting union of self-complacency and indelicacy, to state what he thought of the sermon. Mr. Hall remained silent for some time, hoping that his silence would be rightly interpreted; but this only caused the question to be pressed with greater earnestness. Mr. Hall, at length, said, "There was one very fine passage, Sir." 'I am rejoiced to hear you say so. Pray, Sir, which was it?' "Why, Sir, it was the passage from the pulpit into the vestry."

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here." I replied, 'Yes there are; there are Madingley hill, and the Castle hill, and Gogmagog hill.' This amused him exceedingly,—and he said, "Why, as to Madingley, there is something in that; it reminds you of the Cottons, and the Cottonian Library; but that is not because Madingley is a high hill, but because Sir Robert Cotton was a great man; and even he was not born *there*. Then, as to your second example, do you know that the Castle hill is the place of the public executions? that is no very pleasant association, Sir; and as to your last example, Gogmagog hill is five miles off, and many who go there are puzzled to say whether it is natural or artificial. 'Tis a dismally flat country, Sir; dismally flat.* Ely is twelve miles distant, but the road from Cambridge thither scarcely deviates twelve inches from the same level; and *that's* not very interesting. Before I came to Cambridge, I had read in the prize poems, and in some other works of fancy, of 'the banks of the Cam,' of 'the sweetly flowing stream,' and so on; but when I arrived here, I was sadly disappointed. When I first saw the river as I passed over King's College Bridge, I could not help exclaiming, Why, the stream is standing still to see people drown themselves! and that I am sorry to say is a permanent feeling with me." I questioned the correctness of this impression, but he immediately rejoined, "Shocking place for the spirits, Sir; I wish you may not find it so; it must be the very focus of suicides. Were you ever at Bristol, Sir? there is scenery, scenery worth looking upon, and worth thinking of: and so there is even at Aberdeen, with all its surrounding barrenness. The trees on the banks of the Don, are as fine as those on the banks of the Cam; and the river is alive, Sir; it falls over precipices, and foams and dashes, so as to invigorate and inspire those who

* On Mr. Hall's last visit to Cambridge, one of his friends took him out for a morning's ride, and shewed him the improvements as to cultivation, by means of new enclosures, &c. "True," said he, "but still there is that odious flatness, that insipid sameness of scenery all around." Then, with a tone of great seriousness, he added, "I always say of my Cambridge friends, when I witness their contentedness in such a country, 'Herein is the faith and patience of the saints!' *My* faith and patience could not sustain me under it, with the unvarying kindness of my friends in addition."

On another morning ride, his companion said, 'Look at these fields, with the crops of corn so smooth and so abundant; are not *they* pleasant? And do they not excite the idea of plenty?' He rejoined with his usual promptness, "Oh! yes: and so does a large meal-tub, filled to the brim. But I was not thinking of *plenty*, but of *beauty*."

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witness it. The Don is *a river*, Sir, and the Severn is *a river*; but not even a poet would so designate *the Cam*, unless by an obvious figure he termed it the *sleeping* river."

The semi-playful and rapid manner in which he uttered things of this kind, did not always conceal the deep feeling of incurable and growing dislike with which he was struggling.

When I first became known to Mr. Hall, he had recently determined to revise and extend his knowledge in every department, "to re-arrange the whole furniture of his mind, and the economy of his habits," and to become a thorough student. He proposed devoting six hours a day to reading; but these, unless his friends sought after him, were often extended to eight or nine. He thought himself especially defective in a tasteful and critical acquaintance with the Greek poets; and said he should "once more begin at the beginning." He set to work, therefore, upon the best treatises on the Greek metres then extant. He next read the Iliad and Odyssey twice over, critically; proceeded with equal care through nearly all the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides; and thence extended his classical reading in all directions. To the Latin and Greek poets, orators, historians, and philosophers, he devoted a part of every day, for three or four years. He studied them as a scholar, but he studied them also as a moralist and a philosopher; so that, while he appreciated their peculiarities and beauties with his wonted taste, and carefully improved his style of writing and his tone of thinking, by the best models which they present, he suffered them not to deteriorate the accuracy of his judgement in comparing their value with that of the moderns. Perhaps, however, this assertion should be a little qualified: for, not only at the period of which I am now speaking, but, in great measure, through life, while he spoke of the Greek and Latin poetry, in accordance with the sentiments and feelings of every competent classical scholar, he, with very few exceptions, unduly depreciated the poetry of the present times.

Much as he delighted in classical literature, he was by no means inclined, nor could he have reconciled it with his notions of duty, to circumscribe his reading within its limits. The early Christian fathers, the fathers of the Reformation, the theological writers, both puritan and episcopalian, of the seventeenth century, the most valuable authors on all similar topics down to the present time, including the most esteemed French preachers,

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were all perused with his characteristic avidity: what was most valuable in them became fixed in his unusually retentive memory; and numerous marginal and other references in the most valuable of his books, prove at once the minuteness and closeness of his attention, and his desire to direct his memory to the substances of thought, and not unnecessarily to load it with mere apparatus.

Like many other men of letters, Mr. Hall, at this period, found the advantage of passing from one subject to another at short intervals, generally of about two hours: thus casting off the mental fatigue that one subject had occasioned by directing his attention to another, and thereby preserving the intellect in a state of elastic energy from the beginning to the end of the time devoted daily to study.

Not long after he had entered upon this steady course of reading, he commenced the study of Hebrew, under Mr. Lyons, who then taught that language in the University. He soon became a thorough proficient in it; and, finding it greatly to increase his knowledge of the Old Testament, as well as of its relation to the New, and considerably to improve and enlarge the power of Scripture interpretation, he, from thence to the close of life, suffered scarcely a day to pass without reading a portion of the Old Testament in the original. This practice flowed naturally from one of his principles of action, namely, to go to the fountain-head for information, rather than to derive it from the streams; and from the continued application of that principle, it was found that his habit of reading originals often impaired the accuracy of his quotation of passages from our authorised version, having, in fact, become more familiar with the Hebrew and Greek texts than with any translation. This, which was often conjectured by some of his hearers at Cambridge, was amply confirmed by the subsequent observation of his intimate and much esteemed friend Mr. Ryley, at Leicester.

It would be useless to record, even briefly, Mr. Hall's opinions of the numerous authors, ancient and modern, which he read at this period with such close attention, since they accord generally with those of all men of correct taste and sound judgement. Yet perhaps I may state, with regard to his chief uninspired favourite among the Greek writers, that to none of the ornaments of pagan antiquity did he refer in such

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terms of fervid eulogy as to Plato. Not Cudworth himself could appreciate him more highly. He often expressed his astonishment at the neglect into which he apprehended the writings of Plato were sinking; and said, that an entire disregard of them would be an irrefragable proof of a shallow age. Milton, he remarked, gave the noblest proofs, in his prose writings, of a knowledge and love of Plato; and he expressed a surprise, almost bordering upon contempt, in reference to those who classed this wonderful man with the schoolmen. It was his frequent remark, that even when Plato wrote upon the most abstract subjects, whether moral, metaphysical, or mathematical, his style was as clear as the purest stream, and that his diction was deeply imbued with the poetic spirit. On occasions when he ran no risk of the charge of pedantry, he would, by appropriate quotations, confirm these views. He delighted to expatiate upon this philosopher's notions of vice and virtue, of idleness and industry; and often adduced the platonic definition of education, as "that which qualifies men to be good citizens, and renders them fit to govern or to obey." On one occasion he pointed to a passage, in the first Republic, I think, from which it appeared that Plato perceived the advantages resulting from *the subdivision of labour*, and suggested the natural progress of such subdivision in proportion to the advance of civilization.

In speaking of this philosopher, Mr. Hall illustrated his view of the evil of studying a Greek author, with the aid of a Latin version, by a reference to *Serranus's* magnificent edition of his works, in the Latin version of which he said he had often detected errors. He also mentioned a ridiculous blunder of one of the English translators, who had, it seems, availed himself of a Latin version, in which, as was customary two or three hundred years ago, the omission of an *m* or an *n* was indicated by a bar placed over the preceding letter. Disregarding this superposed bar, the translator had read *hirudo* instead of *hirundo*, and thus, upon Plato's authority, declared the *horse-leach* instead of the *swallow* to be the harbinger of the spring!

I have dwelt rather longer upon these topics than would be at all necessary, were it not to correct the notion which some persons have entertained, that Mr. Hall was indolent, and that though when stimulated to the effort, he would exert himself

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as a profound thinker, yet he was not a man of research, or, in the ordinary acceptation, a good scholar.

When Mr. Hall proposed that we should devote an hour every morning to reading together, he asked me to assist him in his mathematical studies; adding that as a matter of mutual advantage, it might be well that, on alternate mornings, I should be his mathematical tutor, and he my instructor in metaphysics. To this proposal I gladly assented; and it has long been my persuasion that the scheme flowed in great measure from his desire to call my attention to general literature, and especially to the science of mind.

At that period, though he was strong and active, he often suffered extremely from the pain, to which I have before adverted, and which was his sad companion through life. On entering his room to commence our reading, I could at once tell whether or not his night had been refreshing; for, if it had, I found him at the table, the books to be studied ready, and a vacant chair set for me. If his night had been restless, and the pain still continued, I found him lying on the sofa, or more frequently, upon three chairs, on which he could obtain an easier position. At such seasons, scarcely ever did a complaint issue from his lips; but inviting me to take the sofa, our reading commenced. They, however, who knew Mr. Hall, can conjecture, how often, if he became interested, he would raise himself from the chairs, utter a few animated expressions, and then resume the favorite reclining posture. Sometimes, when he was suffering more than usual, he proposed a walk in the fields, where, with the appropriate book, as our companion, we could pursue the subject. If *he* was the preceptor, as was commonly the case in these peripatetic lectures, he soon lost the sense of pain, and nearly as soon escaped from our author, whoever he might be, and expatiated at large upon some train of inquiry or explication, which our course of reading had suggested. As his thoughts enkindled, both his steps and his words became quicker, until, ere long, it was difficult to say, whether the body or the mind were brought most upon the stretch in keeping up with him. This peculiarity I have noticed in a few other men of vigorous intellect and lively imagination.

Mr. Hall's avowed object in recurring at all to his mathematical studies was, the acquisition of so much geometry, trigonometry, and conic-sections, as would enable him thoroughly

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to comprehend the entire scope of the reasoning in Maclaurin's "Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries." For this, indeed, his college studies had in great measure prepared him; and there would have been but little to learn, could he have been satisfied to proceed as students often do. But it was not in his nature to advance, unless he ascertained the firmness of the ground at every step. He reasoned philosophically, for instance, upon the nature of ratios and proportions; so that we had to clear our way through the recondite lectures of Barrow relative to those points, before we could advance to trigonometry. His logical habits, also, made him very reluctant to pass over any geometrical proposition, in which he could not trace the analysis as well as the synthesis. In this manner, and with such views, we went through the proposed course. Of what utility all this was ultimately to Mr. Hall, I cannot precisely say; but I can testify that it was of permanent advantage to his mathematical preceptor, who had not previously formed the habit of tracing apparent results to their foundations; but who, from that period, pursued science with a new interest, kept his eye more steadily upon ultimate principles, and learnt to value such researches quite as much for their intellectual discipline as for their practical benefit*.

In reference to the philosophy of mind, after we had gone slightly over Locke's Essay, his Conduct of the Understanding, and Watts's Ontology, which I had read before, we studied Berkeley, Wollaston, Hartley, Andrew Baxter, Reid, some portions of Bacon's Essays, and of his Treatise on the Advancement of Learning; or rather, I should say, I had the advantage of learning what was most or least valuable in each and all of these, from this admirable living commentator. We were about to proceed to Search's (Abraham Tucker's) "Light

* Shortly after my removal to Woolwich, I invited my late valued friend, Dr. Hutton, to dine with Mr. Hall, at my house. Mr. Hall, for the purpose of drawing the Doctor into conversation, asked him a few questions suggested by some of Barrow's Disquisitions in reference to mathematical measure, and its application to force, momentum, &c. They essentially involved the metaphysics of the subjects of inquiry. He also expatiated upon the imaginative, as well as the rational process, involved in the genesis of curves by motion, as taught by Barrow and Newton. The next day Dr. Hutton said to me, "What an extraordinary man that friend of yours is! Why, he was born to be a mathematician. If you could persuade him to give himself up to the sciences, as Priestley did, he would teach us all something."

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of Nature,"* when some circumstances, which I cannot recall to mind, rendered it inconvenient for us thus to meet, and brought these delightful readings and commentaries to a close. We did not then go through any of Dugald Stewart's works, Mr. Hall regarding him as an elegant expositor of Reid, but greatly inferior in originality. From Bacon's Essays he used to read passages aloud, with the warmest expressions of commendation.

I must not omit to specify, as a peculiarity in the structure of Mr. Hall's mind, that although in every important case he detected and placed in the utmost prominence, an essential defect in the reasoning, a too rapid generalization, or any other unwarrantable deduction, that occurred in Berkeley, or Watts, or Hartley, he was very slow to perceive, very reluctant to admit, any such in the writings of Andrew Baxter. The reader who is conversant with such speculations, will recollect, that in the second volume of Baxter's book on "the Soul," he affirms that our dreams are prompted by separate immaterial beings, and defends his theory with much ingenuity. As we advanced in Baxter's arguments, Mr. Hall exclaimed, "this is very beautiful, Sir; yet, I apprehend there must be some flaw in the reasoning." I suggested one or two objections; he showed immediately that they could not apply. On our next meeting, he accosted me with, "Well, Sir, have you detected any fallacy in Baxter's Theory?" 'Yes, I think I have.' This, however, was soon disposed of, and then another, and another. I at length referred to Dugald Stewart's Theory, after examining which, he said, "I do not think this is tenable; but I suppose it must be admitted that Baxter does not *quite* make out his case. Yet he was a man of great acumen—why did the Scotch philosophers run him down so?"

Still farther to illustrate Mr. Hall's character, his turn of thought and expression, I will now bring together a few such incidents and short remarks, occurring between 1796 and 1803, as present themselves most vividly to my mind.

It will already have appeared that benevolence was a prevailing characteristic. When he had aided a poor man to the full extent of his own pecuniary means, he would sometimes apply to one of his

* Mr. Hall characterized this as a work in which the noblest philosophy was brought down by a master-hand and placed within the reach of every man of sound understanding.

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affluent friends. "Poor ——— is in great distress: some of his family are ill, and he cannot supply proper necessaries. Lend me five shillings for the poor fellow: I will pay you again in a fortnight, unless in the mean time you find that the case deserves your help, and then the donation shall become yours."

His disapprobation of avarice bore a natural relation to his own benevolence. Being informed that a rich man in the neighbourhood, who was by no means celebrated for his liberality, had attended to a tale of distress without relieving it, he said—"Yes, yes: he would listen, but without inclining his head. He may lend a distant ear to the murmurings from the vale beneath, but he remains like a mountain covered with perpetual snow."

On another occasion, a person talking to him of one whom they both knew, and who was very penurious, said—"Poor wretch! you might put his soul into a nut-shell." "Yes, Sir, (Mr. Hall replied) and even then it would creep out at a maggot hole."

His love of sincerity in words and actions was constantly apparent. Once, while he was spending an evening at the house of a friend, a lady who was there on a visit, retired, that her little girl, of four years old, might go to bed. She returned in about half an hour, and said to a lady near her—'She is gone to sleep. I put on my night-cap, and lay down by her, and she soon dropped off.' Mr. Hall, who overheard this, said—"Excuse me, Madam: do you wish your child to grow up a liar?" 'Oh dear no, Sir; I should be shocked at such a thing.' "Then bear with me while I say, you must never *act* a lie before her: children are very quick observers, and soon learn that that which assumes to be what it is not, is a lie, whether acted or spoken." This was uttered with a kindness which precluded offence, yet with a seriousness that could not be forgotten.

His dislike to compliments was thus expressed:—"In compliments two and two *do not* make four; and twenty and twenty fall very far short of forty. Deal not, then, in that deceitful arithmetic."

It was said in Mr. Hall's hearing that "compliments were pleasing truths, and flatteries pleasing untruths." He remarked—"Neither of them are *pleasing* to a man of reflection, for the falsehoods in this case so nearly assume the semblance of truth, that one is perplexed to tell which is actually given; and no man is pleased with perplexity."

"You remember Mr. ———, Sir.* 'Yes, very well.' "Were you aware of his fondness for brandy-and-water?" 'No.' "It was

* This was the individual referred to, Vol. V. p. 421.

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a sad habit; but it grew out of his love of story-telling; and that, also, is a bad habit, a very bad habit, for a minister of the gospel. As he grew old, his animal spirits flagged, and his stories became defective in vivacity: he, therefore, took to brandy-and-water; weak enough, it is true, at first, but soon nearly 'half-and-half.' Ere long he indulged the habit in a morning; and when he came to Cambridge he would call upon me, and, before he had been with me five minutes, ask for a little brandy-and-water, which was, of course, to give him artificial spirits to render him agreeable in his visits to others. I felt great difficulty; for he, you know, Sir, was much older than I was; yet, being persuaded that the ruin of his character, if not of his peace, was inevitable, unless something was done, I resolved upon one strong effort for his rescue. So the next time that he called, and, as usual, said—'Friend Hall, I will thank you for a glass of brandy-and-water,' I replied—"Call things by their right names, and you shall have as much as you please." 'Why, don't I employ the right name? I ask for a glass of brandy-and-water.' "That is the current, but not the appropriate name; ask for *a glass of liquid fire and distilled damnation*, and you shall have a gallon." Poor man! he turned pale, and for a moment seemed struggling with anger. But, knowing that I did not mean to insult him, he stretched out his hand, and said—'Brother Hall, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.' From that time he ceased to take brandy-and-water."

In one of my early interviews with Mr. Hall, I used the word felicity three or four times in rather quick succession. He asked—"Why do you say felicity, Sir? Happiness is a better word, more musical and genuine English, coming from the Saxon." 'Not more musical, I think, Sir.' "Yes, more musical, and so are words derived from the Saxon generally. Listen, Sir: 'My heart is smitten, and withered like grass;'—there's plaintive music. Listen again, Sir: 'Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice;'—there's cheerful music." 'Yes, but *rejoice* is French.' "True, but all the rest is Saxon, and rejoice is almost out of tune with the other words. Listen again: 'Thou hast delivered my eyes from tears, my soul from death, and my feet from falling:' all Saxon, Sir, except *delivered*. I could think of the word *tear*, Sir, till I wept. Then again, for another noble specimen, and almost all good old Saxon-English: 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'"

Shortly after this I was reading the original edition of Doddridge's Pneumatology, and asked Mr. Hall to lend me Kippis's edition, in which the references to other authorities, on the various topics

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discussed, are greatly increased. He told me that he did not possess Kippis's edition, in a tone which *then* surprised me a little, as it shewed that he did not highly estimate Kippis's authority. I therefore asked, 'Was not Dr. Kippis a clever man?' "He might be a very clever man, by nature, for aught I know, but he laid so many books upon his head that his brains could not move." This was, to me, who, at that period, devoted much more time to reading than to thinking, an admirable lesson.

On being asked whether he was an Arminian or a Calvinist, he said—"Neither, Sir, but I believe I recede farther from Arminianism than from Calvinism. If a man profess himself a decided Arminian, I infer from it that he is not a good logician; but, Sir, it does not interfere with his personal piety: look at good Mr. Benson, for example. I regard the question more as metaphysical than religious."

A lady who had been speaking of the Supreme Being with great familiarity, but in religious phraseology, having retired, he said—"I wish I knew how to cure that good lady of her bad habit. I have tried, but as yet, in vain. It is a great mistake to affect this kind of familiarity with the King of kings, and speak of him as though he were a next-door neighbour, from the pretence of love. Mr. Boyle's well-known habit was infinitely to be commended. And one of our old divines, I forget which, well remarks that—'Nothing but ignorance can be guilty of this boldness; that there is no divinity but in a humble fear, no philosophy but shews itself in silent admiration.'"

When two or three gentlemen were discussing the question, whether a man of no religion can be a successful minister of the gospel, surprise was expressed that Mr. Hall remained silent—"Sir, (said he, in reply), I would not deny that a sermon from a bad man may sometimes do good; but the general question does not admit of an argument. Is it at all probable, that one who is a willing servant of Satan, (and that, you know, Sir, is the hypothesis you assume,) will fight *against* him with all his might, and if not, what *success* can be rationally expected?" *

Mr. Hall did not permit his sedulous cultivation of the mind to draw him aside from the cultivation of the heart. The evidences were, indeed, very strong, that his preparation for ministerial duty was devotional as well as intellectual. Thus, his public services, by a striking gradation, for months and years, evinced an obvious growth, in mental power, in literary

* A few more miscellaneous gleanings from Mr. Hall's remarks in conversation are inserted in Appendix, Note A.

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acquisition, and in the seriousness, affection, and ardour of a man of piety. His usefulness and his popularity increased; the church and congregation became considerably augmented; and in 1798, it was found necessary to enlarge the place of worship to accommodate about two hundred more persons.

Early in the year 1799, a severe fever, which brought him, in his own apprehension, and that of his friends, to the brink of the grave, gave him an opportunity of experiencing the support yielded by the doctrines of the cross "in the near views of death and judgement." He "never before felt his mind so calm "and happy." The impression was not only salutary, but abiding; and it again prompted him to the investigation of one or two points, with regard to which he had long felt himself floating in uncertainty. Although he had for some years steadily and earnestly enforced the necessity of divine influence in the transformation of character, and in perseverance in a course of consistent, holy, obedience, yet he spoke of it as "the influence of the spirit of God," and never in express terms, as "the influence of the Holy Spirit." The reason was, that though he fully believed the necessity of spiritual agency in commencing and continuing the spiritual life, he doubted the doctrine of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit. But about this time he was struck with the fact that, whenever in private prayer he was in the most deeply devotional frame, "most overwhelmed with the sense that he was nothing, and God was all in all," he always felt himself inclined to adopt a trinitarian doxology. This circumstance, occurring frequently, and more frequently meditated upon in a tone of honest and anxious inquiry, issued at length in a persuasion that the Holy Spirit is really and truly God, and not an emanation. It was not, however, until 1800, that he publicly included the personality of the Holy Spirit, in his statements of the doctrine of spiritual influence.

In attempting to give some idea of the general character and style of Mr. Hall's public services, while I had the privilege of hearing him at Cambridge, I feel that I shall neither adequately describe what his preaching really was, nor even do justice to my own conceptions of it.

His manner of reading the Scriptures at the beginning of the service was not generally interesting; nor did the portion read, always bear an obvious reference to the text or subject afterwards brought forward. But when passages of Scripture were

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quoted in the sermon, they were so delivered as to give to their true meaning the most intelligible prominence and force.

His prayers were remarkable for their simplicity and their devotional feeling. No person could listen to them without being persuaded, that he who uttered them was really engaged in prayer, was holding communion with his God and Father in Christ Jesus. His tones and his countenance throughout these exercises were those of one most deeply imbued with a sense of his unworthiness, and throwing himself at the feet of the Great Eternal, conscious that he could present no claim for a single blessing, but the blood of atonement, yet animated by the cheering hope that the voice of that blood would prevail. The structure of these prayers never indicated any preconceived plan. They were the genuine effusions of a truly devotional spirit, animated by a vivid recollection of what in his own state, in that of the congregation, of the town and vicinity, needed most ardently to be laid before the Father of Mercies. Thus they were remarkably comprehensive, and furnished a far greater variety on the successive occasions of public worship, than those of any other minister whom I have ever known. The portions which were devoted to intercession, operated most happily in drawing the affections of his people towards himself; since they shewed how completely his christian sympathy had prepared him to make their respective cases his own.

The commencement of his sermons did not excite much expectation in strangers, except they were such as recollected how the mental agitation, produced by diffidence, characterised the first sentences of some of the orators of antiquity. He began with hesitation, and often in a very low and feeble tone, coughing frequently, as though he were oppressed by asthmatic obstructions. As he proceeded his manner became easy, graceful, and at length highly impassioned; his voice also acquired more flexibility, body, and sweetness, and in all his happier and more successful efforts, swelled into a stream of the most touching and impressive melody. The farther he advanced, the more spontaneous, natural, and free from labour, seemed the progression of thought. He announced the results of the most extensive reading, of the most patient investigation, or of the profoundest thinking, with such unassuming simplicity, yet set them in such a position of obvious and lucid reality, that the auditors wondered how things so simple and

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manifest should have escaped them. Throughout his sermons he kept his subject thoroughly in view, and so incessantly brought forward new arguments, or new illustrations, to confirm or to explain it, that with him amplification was almost invariably accumulative in its tendency. One thought was succeeded by another, and that by another, and another, each more weighty than the preceding, each more calculated to deepen and render permanent the ultimate impression. He could at pleasure adopt the unadorned, the ornamental, or the energetic; and indeed combine them in every diversity of modulation. In his higher flights, what he said of Burke might, with the slightest deduction, be applied to himself, "that his "imperial fancy laid all nature under tribute, and collected "riches from every scene of the creation, and every walk of "art;"* and at the same time, that could be affirmed of Mr. Hall which could *not* be affirmed of Mr. Burke, that he never fatigued and oppressed by gaudy and superfluous imagery. Whenever the subject obviously justified it, he would yield the reins to an eloquence more diffusive and magnificent than the ordinary course of pulpit instruction seemed to require; yet so exquisite was his perception of beauty, and so sound his judgement, that not the coldest taste, provided it were real taste, could ever wish an image omitted which Mr. Hall had introduced. His inexhaustible variety augmented the general effect. The same images, the same illustrations, scarcely ever recurred. So ample were his stores, that repetition of every kind was usually avoided; while in his illustrations he would connect and contrast what was disjointed and opposed, or distinctly unfold what was abstracted or obscure, in such terms as were generally intelligible, not only to the well-informed but to the meanest capacity. As he advanced to his practical applications, all his mental powers were shewn in the most palpable but finely balanced exercise. His mind would, if I may so speak, collect itself and come forth with a luminous activity, proving, as he advanced, how vast, and, in some important senses, how next to irresistible those powers were. In such seasons his preaching communicated universal animation: his congregation would seem to partake of his spirit, to think and feel as he did, to be fully influenced by the presence of the objects which he

* See Vol. III. p. 123.

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had placed before them, fully actuated by the motives which he had enforced with such energy and pathos.

All was doubtless heightened by his singular rapidity of utterance,—by the rhythmical structure of his sentences, calculated at once for the transmission of the most momentous truths, for the powers of his voice, and for the convenience of breathing freely at measured intervals,—and, more than all, by the unequivocal earnestness and sincerity which pervaded the whole, and by the eloquence of his most speaking countenance and penetrating eye. In his sublimer strains, not only was every faculty of the soul enkindled and in entire operation, but his very features seemed fully to sympathise with the spirit, and to give out, nay, to *throw* out, thought, and sentiment, and feeling.

From the commencement of his discourse an almost breathless silence prevailed, deeply impressive and solemnizing from its singular intenseness. Not a sound was heard but that of the preacher's voice—scarcely an eye but was fixed upon him—not a countenance that he did not watch, and read, and interpret, as he surveyed them again and again with his rapid, ever-excursive glance. As he advanced and increased in animation, five or six of the auditors would be seen to rise and lean forward over the front of their pews, still keeping their eyes upon him. Some new or striking sentiment or expression would, in a few minutes, cause others to rise in like manner: shortly afterwards still more, and so on, until, long before the close of the sermon, it often happened that a considerable portion of the congregation were seen standing,—every eye directed to the preacher, yet now and then for a moment glancing from one to another, thus transmitting and reciprocating thought and feeling:—Mr. Hall himself, though manifestly absorbed in his subject, conscious of the whole, receiving new animation from what he thus witnessed, reflecting it back upon those who were already alive to the inspiration, until all that were susceptible of thought and emotion seemed wound up to the utmost limit of elevation *on earth*, — when he would close, and they reluctantly and slowly resume their seats.*

* Striking evidences of the most stimulating immediate impression often occurred. I specify only two examples.

In 1312, Mr. Hall, who then resided at Leicester, paid one of his periodical visits to Bristol, and, as usual, often preached at Broadmead. He delivered a most solemn and impressive sermon on the text "dead in trespasses and sins;"

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Scenes like this I have witnessed repeatedly, so productive of intense and hallowed feeling, that, after an interval of more than thirty years, they present themselves to my mind with a more vivid influence than many of the transactions of the last month.

And surely the delightful retrospection may be safely indulged, when it is considered that these sublime exertions were made for the promotion of man's best interests—to warn the impenitent—to shew to the sinner the fatal error of his way—to invite the self-condemned to the only, the all-effectual remedy—to console and encourage the faithful—to distribute the bread of life among those who must otherwise perish—to "build up the church in her most holy faith;"—when it is known, also, that, while men of taste and intellect were both gratified and instructed, the uncultivated rustic heard, and understood, and received the Word of Life, and went on his way rejoicing. Numerous and diversified as were the feelings excited by this extraordinary preacher, none were more prevailing than surprise that one so richly endowed should seem so utterly unconscious of it, and gratitude that the Great Head of the church should have called such a man to his service, and placed him in so important a station as Cambridge, when his intellectual powers were in their full maturity and vigour.

I must not, I perceive, allow myself to sketch the difference between his sermons and his expositions, or between his preaching at Cambridge and in the neighbouring villages: nor must I dwell upon the weekly evening services, when he met a few of his people, chiefly of the poorer classes, in the vestry of his place of worship, and, in a strain of the most chaste and simple

of which the concluding appeals were remarkably sublime and awful. The moment he had delivered the last sentence, Dr. Ryland, then the pastor of the church, hastened part of the way up the pulpit stairs, and, while the tears trickled down his venerable face, exclaimed, with a vehemence which astonished both the preacher and the congregation,—"Let all that are alive in Jerusalem pray for the dead that they may live!"

In 1814, Mr. Hall, while preaching among his old friends at Cambridge, just before he commenced the application of his sermon, uttered a short, but very fervent ejaculatory prayer, during which the whole congregation arose from their seats. Mr. Hall seemed surprised for a moment, and but for a moment, and remained in prayer for about five minutes. He then resumed his sermon, and continued preaching for more than twenty minutes, in such a strain of magnificent and overwhelming eloquence, as the extraordinary incident might be expected to produce from powers and feelings like his, the whole congregation standing until the close of the sermon.

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eloquence, comforted and instructed them in the "things pertaining to the kingdom of God."* The diversity of his powers, the sincerity of his character, the warmth of his love to God and man, were in all alike apparent: and no one that was not the victim of prejudice, or the slave of sin, could have seen him engaged in the service of God, without being ready to testify, "this man must have read much, thought much, and prayed much," to be thus admirably furnished for his great work.

It would be highly instructive and gratifying to know by what process so finished a preacher, so exquisite and tasteful a writer, as Mr. Hall, prepared his respective compositions for the pulpit and the press. But the reluctance with which he spoke either of himself or of his occupations, deprives us of much of this desirable information. At the time when our intercourse was most frequent and unrestrained, I have often been with him while he was preparing for the pulpit, and have occasionally ventured to ask him a few questions; his answers, always frank and elucidatory, however concise, enabled me, by means, also, of frequent reference to his notes on different sermons which I heard delivered, to form tolerably satisfactory conjectures as to the course pursued. He then stated, as he since has to different friends, that he never proceeded even to think of adopting a specific text, as fitted for a sermon, until the matter it presented stood out in the form of a particular, distinct, and precise topic; he could then take it up and lay it down as he pleased. Of his extraordinary power of abstraction I have already spoken.† By its means he could, at pleasure, insulate, nay in a manner enclose himself, from every thing around him; and thus pursue his mental operations. It was usual with him to have five or six subjects under simultaneous training; to either of which he could direct his attention as inclination or necessity required. The grand divisions of thought, the heads of a sermon, for example, he would trace out with the most prominent lines of demarcation; and these for some

* The topics of these evening lectures were often biographical. The lives and characters of Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Hannah, Samuel, Ruth, Daniel, &c. were briefly delineated, and made the basis of some useful practical reflections. Whenever the subject would fairly allow it, these reflections had an appropriate bearing upon the duties, the trials and perplexities, of persons in humble life. The sermon on "John fulfilled his course," inserted in the present volume, is very analogous in its character to the discourses to which I here refer; but its commencement is more elaborate.

† See Vol. I. p. 10.

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years supplied all the hints that he needed in the pulpit, except on extraordinary occasions.* To these grand divisions he referred, and upon them suspended all the subordinate trains of thought. The latter, again, appear to have been of two classes altogether distinct; outline trains of thought, and trains into which much of the detail was interwoven. In the outline train, the whole plan was carried out and completed as to the argument: in that of detail, the illustrations, images, and subordinate proofs, were selected and classified; and in those instances where the force of an argument, or the probable success of a general application, would mainly depend upon the language, even that was selected and appropriated, sometimes to the precise collocation of the words. Of some sermons, no portions whatever were wrought out thus minutely; the language employed in preaching being that which spontaneously occurred at the time: of others, this minute attention was paid to the verbal structure of nearly half: of *a few*, the entire train of preparation, almost from the beginning to the end, extended to the very sentences. Yet the marked peculiarity consisted in this, that the process, even when thus directed to minutiæ in his more elaborate efforts, did not require the use of the pen; at least at the time to which these remarks principally apply.† For, Mr. Hall had a singular faculty for continuous mental composition, apart from the aid which writing supplies. Words were so disciplined to his use, that the more he thought on any subject, the more closely were the topics of thought associated with appropriate terms and phrases; and it was manifest that he had carefully disciplined his mind to this as an independent exercise, probably to avoid the pain and fatigue which always attended the process of writing. Whenever he pleased he could thus pursue the consecution to a great extent, in sentences,

* As an example, both of a comprehensive miniature outline, and of provision in the notes for accurate expression, where he wished to state with clearness and precision his theological sentiments on a most momentous point, see Mr. Hall's own analysis of the sermon on John i. 35, 36, at p. 278 of this volume, and the language actually employed in the sermon itself, p. 298.

† Mr. Hall, doubtless, varied his manner of preparation in different periods. For three or four years after his settlement at Leicester, he wrote down nearly a third of the sermon, and left all the rest to flow from the outline plan while he was preaching. But for some years afterwards he seldom allowed his notes to exceed two pages, and is thought to have indulged himself more than at any other period of his life in entirely extemporaneous eloquence. At that time his sermons were especially distinguished by simplicity and pathos.

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many of them perfectly formed and elaborately finished, as he went along, and easily called up again by memory, as occasion required; not, however, in their separate character, as elements of language, but because of their being fully worked into the substance of thought. It hence happened that the excellence which other persons often attain as to style, from the use of the pen, in written, visible, composition (employing the eye upon words, instead of fixing the memory upon substantial mental product, and, it may be, diminishing the intellectual power by substituting for one of its faculties a mechanical result,) he more successfully and uniformly attained by a purely meditative process. And I am persuaded that if he could have *instantly* impressed his trains of thought upon paper, with the incorporated words, and with the living spirit in which they were conceived, hundreds if not thousands of passages would have been preserved, as chaste and polished in diction, as elastic and energetic in tone, as can be selected from any part of his works. What, however, could not thus be accomplished by the pen, has been achieved, as to immediate impression, in the pulpit; and hence his celebrity, unequalled, in modern times, as a sacred orator.

In preparing for the press the process was in many respects essentially different. There was, from the outset, a struggle to overcome the reluctance to write, arising from the anticipation of increased pain, which he knew *must* be endured so long as he was engaged in the mechanical act; and at every return to the labour he had a new reluctance to surmount. There was, moreover, the constant effort to restrain a mind naturally active, ardent, and rapid in all its movements, to a slow progression; nay, a farther effort, and, to a mind so constituted, a very irksome one, to bring the thoughts back from the ultimate issue to which they were incessantly hastening, and cause them to pass and repass, again and again, by a comparatively sluggish course, the successive links in a long chain. Nor was this all. He had formed for himself, as a writer, an ideal standard of excellence, which could not be reached:* his perception of beauty in composition was so delicate and refined, that in regard to his own productions it engendered perhaps a fastidious taste; and, deep and prevailing as was his humility, he was not insen-

* "I am tormented with the desire of writing better than I can."—Vol. V. p. 471.

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sible to the value of a high reputation, and therefore cautiously guarded against the risk of diminishing his usefulness among certain classes of readers, by consigning any production to the world that had not been thoroughly subjected to the *labor limæ*. Hence the extreme slowness with which he composed for the press; writing, improving, rejecting the improvement; seeking another, rejecting it; recasting whole sentences and pages; often recurring precisely to the original phraseology; and still oftener repenting, when it was too late, that he had not done so. All this he lamented as a serious defect, declaring that it gave, in his own view, to his written compositions, an air of stiffness and formality, which deprived him of all complacency in them. And I cannot but think that, notwithstanding the exquisite harmony and beauty which characterize every thing that he has published, they were even, in point of felicity of diction, and the majestic current and force of language, inferior to the "winged words" that escaped from his lips, when "his soul was enlarged" in the discharge of ministerial duty.

May we not suggest a probable reason for this, by observing that when Mr. Hall stood forth as the minister of the sanctuary, he placed the fire upon the altar in the humble confidence that it would be kept alive by the communication of grace and spirit from on high; but that, when he came before the public as an author, he sometimes extinguished his own flame, pure and ethereal as it notwithstanding was, in his efforts to ornament the vase in which he held it up to view.*

But I must not dwell longer on these topics.

In the beginning of the year 1799, Mr. Hall had the happiness of renewing personal intercourse with his early friend. Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Mackintosh, being about to deliver a course of lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, deemed it expedient, for the completion of some of the extensive researches which that important undertaking required, to reside for a few months at Cambridge, that he might consult the more valuable of the college libraries, as well as the public library belonging to the University generally. Another distinguished individual, the late Dr. Samuel Parr,

* That Mr. Hall did not always require much time for the production of elegant and spirited writing, interspersed with passages of remarkable beauty, and of the most elaborate polish, is plain from his two earliest publications, both composed *currente calamo*, and each yielding as powerful and finished specimens of style and thought as can be drawn from his Works.

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spent several weeks at Cambridge at the same time, for the purpose of visiting some of his old friends, of associating with Mr. Mackintosh, and of becoming personally acquainted with Mr. Hall, whose character he had long known and highly valued. Mr. Hall, pleased to refresh his spirits in the society of his beloved fellow-student, and by no means unwilling to glean something from the stores of so profound a scholar as Dr. Parr, often spent his evenings with these two eminent men, and a few members of the University, who were invited to their select parties, and with whom, from that time, he cultivated an intimacy.

This circumstance led to the formation of Mr. Hall's most inveterate habit,—that of smoking. Previously to this period, he had always censured the practice in the strongest terms; but, on associating with Dr. Parr, his aversion to what he used to denominate "an odious custom," soon passed away. The Doctor was always enveloped in a dense cloud of smoke, from sun-rise until midnight; and no person could remain in his company long without great inconvenience, unless he learnt to smoke in self-defence. Mr. Hall, therefore, made the attempt, and quickly overcame every obstacle. I well recollect entering his apartment just as he had acquired this happy art; and, seeing him sit at ease, the smoke rising above his head in lurid, spiral volumes, he inhaling and apparently enjoying its fragrance, I could not suppress my astonishment. "O Sir, "(said he,) I am only qualifying myself for the society of a "Doctor of Divinity; and this, holding up the pipe, is my test "of admission."

Mr. Hall's Cambridge friends were divided in their feelings and wishes with regard to this new practice. The majority approved it, from a belief that the narcotic influence of tobacco would mitigate the pain which he had so long endured. Others, apprehending that his habit of converting *every thing* into a source of enjoyment would transform him into an unremitting smoker, and that injury to his health would ensue, ventured to expostulate with him. I belonged to the latter class, and put into his hands Dr. Adam Clarke's pamphlet on "The Use and Abuse of Tobacco," with a request that he would read it. In a few days he returned it, and at once, as if to preclude discussion, said, "Thank you, Sir, for Adam Clarke's pamphlet. "I can't refute his arguments, and I can't give up smoking."

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We now approach the time when Mr. Hall acquired a signal extension of celebrity. Many who had hailed the French Revolution of 1789 as an event productive of extensive benefit, were compelled to admit, after a few years, that the great leaders in that Revolution, and still more their followers, committed grievous blunders, and grosser crimes, from the want of higher than political principles to control their actions. Yet, in the false security which some felt, and others insidiously aimed to inspire, it was suspected by but few, that much of our periodical literature had, under the plea of encouraging free discussion, become irreligious in its tendency, and that various unprincipled demagogues in London and the large manufacturing towns, not only held up to admiration the conduct of the detestable actors in "the reign of terror," but were constantly exerting themselves to disseminate democracy and atheism conjointly. Such, however, was the fact. From 1795 to 1799, debating rooms were opened in various parts of the metropolis, in which the most barefaced infidelity was taught, and to which the lower classes were invited, often on Sunday evenings, by a variety of specious allurements. Mr. Hall was no sooner aware of the existence of these sources of evil, and of the mischief they produced, than he began to use the voice of warning, in his private intercourse among his people, and to impress upon such of the young as he feared had received a sceptical bias, that of all fanaticism the fanaticism of infidelity then prevalent was at once the most preposterous and the most destructive.

Mr. Hall's persuasion of the continuance and growth of this infidel spirit, induced him to preach and publish his celebrated sermon on "Modern Infidelity;" which was not, therefore, as many affirmed, a hasty production, written under excited feelings and false alarms, but the deliberate result of a confirmed belief, that the most strenuous efforts were required to repel mischief so awfully and insidiously diffused.

Before the publication of this sermon, its author had fully "counted the cost" as to the obloquy which it would bring upon him from various quarters; but he did not at all anticipate its extraordinary success, and the corresponding extension of his reputation. As repeated editions were called for, he yielded his assent with great hesitation, from a fear that the copies would remain unsold; and he was the last to see, what every one else perceived, that it had carried his celebrity as a

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profound thinker and eloquent writer far beyond the limits of the denomination to which he was so bright an ornament.

Immediately after this sermon issued from the press, the consistency and integrity of the author were vehemently attacked in several letters which appeared in the "Cambridge Intelligencer," then a popular and widely circulated newspaper. Its editor, Mr. Flower, had received in an ill spirit Mr. Hall's advice that he would repress the violent tone of his political disquisitions, and had, from other causes which need not now be developed, become much disposed to misinterpret his motives and depreciate his character. He, therefore, managed to keep alive the controversy for some months, occasionally aiding, by his own remarks, those of his correspondents who opposed Mr. Hall, and as often casting illiberal insinuations upon the individual who had stepped forward in defence of the sermon and its author. A few months after this discussion subsided, Mr. Flower, who had been summoned before the House of Lords, and imprisoned in Newgate for a libel on Bishop Watson, published an exculpatory pamphlet; in which, with a view to draw the attention of the public as speedily as possible from his own unmanly and disingenuous conduct, while at the bar of the House, he soon passed from his personal defence to a virulent attack upon Mr. Hall, his former pastor.

Shortly afterwards, another controvertist, a Mr. Anthony Robinson, unwilling that Mr. Flower and his coadjutors should gather all the laurels in so noble a conflict, hastened into the field; and, it must be admitted, left them far behind. He published, in a pamphlet of more than sixty pages, "An Examination" of Mr. Hall's Sermon. He did not bring against the preacher the positive charge of apostasy, having discrimination enough to see that it was one thing to refer the atrocities of the reign of terror to the political principles of the perpetrators, and quite another to ascribe them to their avowed and unblushing atheism. But the crimes that he imputed to Mr. Hall, were, that he was "an imitator of Mr. Burke," that he was "fierce and even savage in expression," that his "charges against atheism are unfounded," and that he taught "that it was excusable, if not meritorious, to punish men for errors in religious opinions!" For himself, he maintained, that "all men are essentially alike in moral conduct;" that the sum of all the

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morality of religionists is, "do good unto the household of faith, and to them only; kill, plunder, calumniate the heretics;" that "all public religions are opposed to all private morality;" that "atheism (on the contrary) tends but little to alter our moral sentiments;" and that "all religions except the belief that rewards are to be conferred upon the beneficent, and for that service exclusively, are not merely as bad, but *infinitely worse than any kind or degree of scepticism;*" because "atheism leaves every human present motive *in full force*, whilst every religion or mode of faith different from what is above expressed, changes the name and the nature of morality, saps the foundations of all benevolence, and introduces malice, hostility and murder, *under the pretext of love to God.*" This being a fair specimen of the shameless impiety with which the press then teemed, we need not wonder at the applauses bestowed upon Mr. Hall for advancing with such singular talent and ability to stem the torrent.

With the exception of a few letters from private friends, who disapproved of his denominating the Roman Catholic clergy "the Christian priesthood," every communication he received was highly gratifying, especially as it did justice to his motives. The most distinguished members of the University were loud in his praises: numerous passages in the sermon which were profound in reasoning, or touching and beautiful in expression, were read and eulogized in every college and almost every company; and the whole composition was recommended in the charges and sermons of the dignified and other clergy in terms of the warmest praise. The "Monthly Review" (then the leading critical journal) the "British Critic," (at that time under the able superintendence of Dr. Nares,) and other Reviews, gave to the sermon the highest commendation. Kett in his "Elements of General Knowledge," William Belsham in his "History of Great Britain," Dr. Parr in the notes to his celebrated "Spital Sermon," and many others, were profuse in their expressions of panegyric. From that time Mr. Hall's reputation was placed upon an eminence, which it will probably retain as long as purity and elevation of style, deeply philosophical views of the springs and motives of action, and correct theological sentiments, are duly appreciated in the world *.

* That the reader may be put in possession of what was most interesting in the panegyrical notices to which I have above alluded, I shall insert the sub-

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Of the letters received by Mr. Hall on this occasion, the following from the pen of his friend Mackintosh, has escaped the ravages of time.

"*Serle Street, Lincoln's Inn,*
"*26 March*, 1800.

"DEAR HALL,

"FROM the enclosed letter, you will see the opinion which the Bishop of London * has formed of your sermon, and you will observe that he does some justice to your merit. Mr. Archdeacon Eaton, to whom the letter was written, has allowed me to send it to you; and I thought it might not be disagreeable to you to have it, as the opinion of a man, not indeed of very vigorous understanding, but an elegant writer, a man of taste and virtue, not to mention his high station in the church.

"I last night had a conversation about the sermon with a man of much greater talents, at a place where theological, or even literary discussions, are seldom heard. It was with *Mr. Windham, at the Duchess of Gordon's rout.* I asked him whether he had read it. He told me that he had, that he recommended it to every body; and, among others, on that very day, to the new Bishop of Bangor,† who had dined with him. He said that he was exceedingly struck with the style, but still more with the matter. He particularly praised the passage on vanity as an admirable commentary on Mr. Burke's observations on vanity in his character of Rousseau. He did not like it the worse, he said, for being taken from the source of all good, as he considered Mr. Burke's works to be. He thought, however, that you had carried your attack on vanity rather too far. He had recommended the sermon to Lord Grenville, who seemed sceptical about any thing good coming from the pastor of a Baptist congregation, especially at Cambridge.

stance of two reviews written by Sir James Mackintosh, and of the often-cited note of Dr. Parr, neither of which is now easily attainable, in a note at the end of this Memoir. See Note B, Appendix.

On the publication of Dr. Parr's "Spital Sermon," I took a copy of it to Mr. Hall; and sat down at his table while he hastily turned over the leaves. He was greatly amused by the cursory examination, but had evidently no expectation that any of the notes referred to himself. "What a profusion of Greek, Sir! Why, if I were to write so, they would call me a pedant; but it is all natural in Parr." "What a strange medley, Sir. The gownsmen will call him *Farrago Parr.*" At length I saw his eye glance upon the notes which relate to himself. His countenance underwent the most rapid changes, indicating surprise, regret, and pity: in a very few minutes he threw down the book, and exclaimed, "Poor man! poor man! I am very sorry for him! He is certainly insane, Sir! Where were his friends, Sir? Was there nobody to sift the folly out of his notes, and prevent its publication? Poor man!"

* Dr. Porteus. This enclosure is not now extant. † Dr. Cleaver.

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"This, you see, is the unhappy impression which Priestley has made, and which, if you proceed as you have so nobly begun, you will assuredly efface. But you will never do all the good which it is in your power to do, unless you assert your own importance, and call to mind that, as the Dissenters have no man comparable to you, it is your province to guide them, and not to be guided by their ignorance and bigotry. I am almost sorry you thought any apology due to those senseless bigots who blamed you for compassion [towards] the clergy of France,* as innocent sufferers and as martyrs of the Christian faith during the most barbarous persecution that has fallen upon Christianity, perhaps since its origin, but certainly since its establishment by Constantine. * * * * * * * * * * * I own I thought well of Horsley when I found him, in his charge, call these unhappy men 'our Christian Brethren:' the bishops and clergy of the persecuted church of France! This is the language of truth. This is the spirit of Christianity.

"I met with a combination in Ovid, the other day, which would have suited your sermon. Speaking of the human descendants of the giants, he says—

"Sed et illa propago
"Contemptrix superûm, sævæque avidissima cædis
"Et violenta fuit. Scires è sanguine notos." MET. I. 160.

"The union of ferocity with irreligion is agreeable to your reasoning.

"I am going to send copies of my third edition† to Paley and Watson, to Fox and the Lord Chancellor.‡ I should like to send copies of your sermon with them. If you will direct six copies to be sent here, I shall distribute them in such a manner as will, I think, not be hurtful.

"Mrs. Mackintosh joins me in the most kind and respectful remembrance. Believe me ever,

"Dear Hall,
"Your affectionate friend,
"JAMES MACKINTOSH."

Mr. Mackintosh continued to evince both the steadiness of his friendship for Mr. Hall, and the high value which he set upon this Sermon, by frequently quoting it and applying it to the elucidation of the Lectures which he was then delivering in Lincoln's-Inn. Several of his auditors were, in consequence, induced sometimes to spend their Sundays at Cambridge, that

* See Vol. I. p. 79.
† Of the Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations.
‡ The Earl of Rosslyn.

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they might listen to the pulpit instructions of the individual of whom they had heard so much. Many also of the members of the University, including not merely under-graduates, but college fellows and tutors, were often seen at the Baptist place of worship. These sometimes amounted to fifty or sixty: and a few of them attended so constantly upon the afternoon services that they became almost regarded as regular hearers. Among the latter, some have since become distinguished men, and occupy important stations either in the church or in the public service, as statesmen or senators.

The attendance of so many university students upon the services of a Dissenting Minister, at length began to excite alarm among the "Heads of Houses;" of whom a meeting was summoned to consider the expediency of interposing some authoritative measure to prevent this irregularity. But Dr. Mansel, then master of the largest college, Trinity, and afterwards Bishop of Bristol, "declared that he could not be a party in such a measure: he admired and revered Mr. Hall, both for his talents and for his genuine liberality; he had ascertained that his preaching was not that of a partisan, but of an enlightened minister of Christ; and that therefore if he were not the Master of Trinity he should certainly often attend himself; and that even now he had experienced a severe struggle before he could make up his mind to relinquish so great a benefit." Shortly after this he personally thanked Mr. Hall, not only for his sermon, but for his general efforts in the christian cause; and, through the medium of a common friend, endeavoured to induce him to enter the established church. This, I believe, was the only *direct* attempt to persuade Mr. Hall to conform.

None of these circumstances were permitted to draw Mr. Hall aside from his ordinary course. His studies, his public duties, his pastoral visits, were each assigned their natural place, as before. If there were any change, it was manifest in his increased watchfulness over himself, and, perhaps, in giving a *rather* more critical complexion than before, to certain portions of his morning expositions, and in always concluding them with such strong practical appeals as might be suited to a congregation of mixed character.

If I do not greatly mistake, however, his sentiments with regard to controversy in general were considerably modified, from this period. The language of the preface to his sermon, on the

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advantages of union, became the language of his heart and conduct; so that he abstained from public discussions except on questions that seemed of vital importance, either in regard to fundamental truth, or the essential privileges of christians. Having learnt that one of the severest trials of human virtue is the trial of controversy, he resolved, on occasions when silence became inexpedient or censurable, not to repel even injustice and misrepresentation in an angry spirit. Thus when he undertook the refutation of Bishop Horsley's charge, that village preachers among methodists and dissenters were teachers of insubordination and sedition, indignant as he doubtless felt at so unjust an insinuation, he opposed it in a manner as remarkable for the conciliatory spirit which it exhibits, as for the singular train of original thought, and cogent argument, which runs through that interesting fragment.*

In little more than two years after the publication of the sermon on Modern Infidelity, Mr. Hall again appeared before the public as an author. The transient peace of Amiens was celebrated by a general thanksgiving throughout England on the 1st of June, 1802. In the sermon preached by Mr. Hall on that occasion, he endeavoured first to awaken the gratitude of his auditors by a most touching picture of the horrors of war, from which Europe had just escaped; and then to apply the gratitude so excited, to acts of benevolence. I have already adverted† to Mr. Hall's reasons for preaching that sermon *memoriter*, without deviation, from his own written copy. I recur to it for a moment, merely to state that though it was delivered with a most impressive dignity, and with less rapidity than that to which he usually yielded himself, yet, in one or two parts, he obviously felt great difficulty in checking his inclination either to modify his language, or to expatiate more at large. This was especially observable at the passage commencing with "Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the ap-"proach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful "villages in this neighbourhood."‡ He mentioned afterwards, that the struggle between his desire to correct what he, just then, saw was "a confusion in the grouping," and his determination "not to deviate from his lesson," was such as rendered

* That on Village Preaching commenced in 1801. See Vol. III. pp. 333—406.
† Vol. I. p. 9. ‡ Vol. I p. 91.

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it almost impossible for him to proceed. To this kind of perplexity he never again exposed himself.

The nation had scarcely tasted the blessings of peace, when a dispute on one of the articles of the treaty of Amiens involved us in a fresh war with the French. Buonaparte, then First Consul, aware of the British ascendency at sea, resolved first to attack our continental dominions. He, also, seized on the persons and property of the numerous English who had visited France during the brief interval of peace, detaining them as prisoners of war; and then menaced this country with invasion. So strange, and in some respects, so atrocious a commencement of hostilities, had a singular effect in melting down dissension, and diffusing a spirit of almost unexampled unanimity, among all ranks and classes of the community. To adopt Mr. Hall's emphatic language: "It was a struggle for existence, not for empire. It must surely be regarded as a happy "circumstance that the contest did not take this shape at an "earlier period, while many were deceived by certain specious "pretences of liberty into a favourable opinion of our enemy's "designs. The popular delusion had passed; the most unexampled prodigies of guilt had dispelled it; and, after a series "of rapine and cruelty, *had torn from every heart the last "fibres of mistaken partiality.*"* At this momentous period Mr. Hall's love of his country was again signally evinced. On the fast day, 19th October, 1803, he preached at Bristol, where he was then on a visit, a sermon afterwards published,—"The Sentiments proper to the Present Crisis," which had the happiest effect in enkindling the flame of generous, active patriotism.

This sermon, perhaps, excited more general admiration than any of the author's former productions; on account of its masterly exposure of prevailing errors, its original and philosophical defence of some momentous truths, and its remarkable appropriateness to the exigencies of the crisis. The last ten pages were thought by many (and by Mr. Pitt, among the number) to be fully equal in genuine eloquence to any passage of the same length that can be selected from either ancient or modern orators. They were re-printed in various periodical publications, and widely circulated in every direction; and they evidently suggested some of the finest thoughts in Sir James

* See Vol. I. p. 184.

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Mackintosh's splendid defence of Peltier, the Editor of *L'Ambigu*, who was tried *in London* for a libel on Buonaparte.

In an old manuscript of Mr. Hall's, containing outline notes of sermons preached by him in 1801, 1802, and 1803, scarcely any of them occupying more than two pages, there are inserted the first rude sketch of this valuable sermon, and, at the distance of several pages, a few hints of thoughts and sentences designed to be introduced near the close.

"I. Particulars in which our notions are wrong, or 'we speak not aright,' with regard to national judgments.

"1. Political speculations on the secondary causes of our calamities, exclusive of a regard to the hand of God.

"2. Wanton and indiscriminate censure of the conduct of our rulers.

"We are permitted within ..... limits to animadvert on the measures of government.

"3. A confidence in an arm of flesh.

"Cursed is man, &c.

"4. A reliance on our supposed superior virtue.

"5. General lamentations on the corruptions of the age.

"Right sentiments. An acknowledgement of the justice and dominion of God.

"Sincere confession of our sins. Dan. ix. 8. Zech. x. 11, &c."

Such was the original synopsis. The hints intended to be worked in towards the close of the sermon, are as below.

"Eternal God! (O thou,) who hast at once declared thyself the God of Peace and the Lord of Hosts, go forth with our armies, and shelter (shield) their heads in the day of battle: give them (endow them with) that undaunted courage, that ..... from trouble which springs from a sense of thy presence.

"Under thy conduct, and fighting under thy banners, we will employ all the resources which lie within our reach, ... without trusting in an arm of flesh ..... while we behold with the eye of faith, what thy prophet discerned in ancient times, the plains filled with horses of fire and chariots of fire.

"There is surely not one person here who will tempt himself to ..... by the fear of death, when he reflects that, in the failure of this great enterprise, should the crisis arrive, he must feel a thousand deaths in the extinction of religion, in the spoliation of property, in the violation of chastity, in the confusion of all orders ..... when all that is noble or holy will be trampled upon ..... when death

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would be sought with the avidity of ..... when the enemies' triumphs will be felt in ..... mourn ..... freedom entombed."

I have here presented the incipient germs of thought and expression, in this extraordinary production, from a persuasion that the man of research into the operations of intellect will be deeply interested on comparing them with their finished result, as exhibited in the first volume.

On looking back upon the preceding pages, I perceive that I shall have laid myself open to the charge of dwelling too long upon that portion of Mr. Hall's life during which I also resided at Cambridge. Let me simply observe, then, that it was the portion in which his fine character assumed, by the means I have been tracing, its true place in public estimation; and that I may be forgiven if I have thus dwelt upon that bright period of my own existence in which I was open to the constant influence of association with one so pre-eminent in mental and moral excellence. Yet I am not disposed to allow the interesting memory of a long friendship to interfere with biographical fidelity. I have spoken of Mr. Hall's richer qualities agreeably to the estimate I then formed, but, with a conviction that they had not at that period reached their full maturity and vigour. I shall now advert to a few of his defects, but with an equally strong persuasion that they diminished as his age, and judgement, and piety advanced.

I have already remarked that Mr. Hall was impetuous in argument. I must here add that he sometimes contended more for victory than for truth. I never knew him voluntarily take what he believed to be the wrong side of an argument, for the sake of shewing how adroitly he could carry on the advocacy of any opinions which he, for the moment, took the fancy to maintain; but, if ever he precipitated himself into the assertion of erroneous sentiment, he would strenuously defend his opinion; and, on such occasions, would seem more pleased with perplexing and confounding his opponents, than with faithfully endeavouring to set either them or himself right. This habit was very much restrained, if not altogether overcome, in the latter part of his life. Be it observed, however, that at no time did it tempt him to trifle with the sanctities of religion.

Besides this yielding to the temptation of making the matter of truth and error a prize for contest, there was another thing

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which, in social life, depreciated the *practical* value of his great ability, namely, a random carelessness in throwing out opinions and estimates of subjects, books, or men. Many of those opinions were graphically correct, and highly valuable, and they were usually clothed in an aphorismatic terseness of language; yet, were too often such, that plain, credulous-listeners for instruction, regarding him as an oracle, would leave him with incorrect and fallacious notions of the topics on which he had spoken, and would, therefore, be strangely perplexed two or three weeks afterwards, on hearing, or hearing reported, contrary opinions on the same subjects stated by him subsequently, when farther investigation had corrected his judgement. Sometimes, too, especially when indulging in panegyric, he would, even in conversation, give himself up to the feelings of the orator, and allow his fancy to escape into the *ideal*, sketching the picture then existing in his own thoughts, rather than that of the individual whom he imagined himself describing.

It was also much to be regretted, that when in company he did not keep habitually in view the good which his great talents and high character qualified him to impart. His conversation, though always conveying information on the various subjects generally brought forward in cultivated society, did not indicate the prevailing purpose of leading the minds of others in a right direction. Or, if he entered society with this determination, he frequently permitted the circumstances into which he was thrown, to divert him from his purpose, thus giving away his admirable conversational powers to the mere casual train of topics, many of them trivial in interest. There could not but be various acute remarks, and every now and then a piece of valuable disquisition, or a most important sentiment, or an eloquent flow of striking observations; yet there was not a systematic bearing toward positive utility. Often, indeed, has Mr. Hall lamented this defect: often, as we have been returning from a party which he had kept alive by the brilliancy and variety of his observations, has he said, "Ah! Sir, I have again "contributed to the loss of an evening, as to every thing truly "valuable: go home with me, that we may spend at least one "hour in a manner which becomes us."

It should be added, however, that it was only in larger parties that this occurred. I never spent an evening with him alone,

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or with the addition of one or two select companions, in which the sublimer purposes of religious as well as intellectual intercourse were not prevailingly kept in view.

In adverting to the deficiencies in Mr. Hall's character, I must, farther, remark that he did not always seem adequately alive to *special* modes and efforts of utility. There were times when his apparent indifference must have been thought scarcely compatible with his uniform benevolence and piety, unless by those who were thoroughly aware that his infirmities often compelled him to avoid active exertions, except those which fell within the range of ministerial duty: yet, at other seasons, he exerted himself so powerfully and successfully in favour of some grand object, as, in great measure, to compensate for his habitually avoiding the ordinary detail of minor operations.

His defects, on whatever occasions they shewed themselves, were as remote as possible from littleness, and were such as would be most naturally found in a noble character. We may hence learn, however, that a man, though far enriched above his fellows with intellectual and spiritual endowments, still manifests the frailties of a fallen being; and that it always behoves us, therefore, with Christian discrimination, to distinguish between grace and nature, to give to God his own glory, and to refer to men their own infirmities.

But I must return from this digression. During the early months of the year 1803, the pain in Mr. Hall's back increased, both in intenseness and continuity, depriving him almost always of refreshing sleep, and depressing his spirits to an unusual degree. On one of his visits to Kettering, and its neighbourhood, he consulted Dr. Kerr of Northampton, who recommended him to reside a few miles from Cambridge, and to have recourse to horse exercise. In consequence of this advice, he took a house at Shelford, a village about five miles from Cambridge; and the frequent and short journeys on horseback which thus became necessary for a season, seemed beneficial. Yet, the advantage was not of long continuance. He missed his delightful evenings spent in the society of the intelligent classes of the congregation (of whom there was a much higher proportion than in most congregations,) and he missed still more, the simple, heart-refreshing remarks of the poor of his flock, whose pious converse had always been peculiarly soothing to his mind. It is true, he there enjoyed intercourse with two excellent men,

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both of whom he cordially esteemed, Mr. James Nutter, a valuable member of his church at Cambridge, and the Rev. Thomas Thomason, afterwards one of the East India Company's chaplains at Calcutta. With these friends he sometimes spent his evenings; and in company with the latter, who was Mr. Simeon's curate at Trinity Church, he frequently rode to Cambridge on the Sunday mornings; these brothers in the gospel ministry proceeding thus pleasantly, "in the unity of the Spirit," to their respective spheres of labour in the church of God. Gratifying, however, as this intercourse was, both to Mr. Hall, and his valued neighbours, it still left him too much alone, and too much exposed to all the morbid influences of a disordered body, and of a mind overstrained. Often has he been known to sit close at his reading, or yet more intensely engaged in abstract thought, for more than twelve hours in the day; so that, when one or both of his kind friends have called upon him, in the hope of drawing him from his solitude, they have found him in such a state of nervous excitement, as led them to unite their efforts in persuading him to take some mild narcotic, and retire to rest. The painful result may be anticipated. This noble mind lost its equilibrium; and he who had so long been the theme of universal admiration, now became the subject of as extensive a sympathy. This event occurred in November, 1804. Mr. Hall was placed under the care of Dr. Arnold, of Leicester, whose attention, with the blessing of God, in about two months, restored him both to mental and bodily health.

During this afflictive suspension of his pastoral duties, his church and congregation gave the most unequivocal proofs that they had caught somewhat of his generous and exalted spirit, and that they were desirous to conduce to his welfare in temporal things, in acknowledgement of the spiritual blessings he had been the means of conveying to them. They set on foot a subscription, to which themselves contributed most liberally, and which, by the aid of other friends, became sufficient to produce, besides a life annuity of one hundred pounds, a farther sum nearly equal, vested in government securities, the latter to be at his own disposal at death: each sum being properly vested in trustees *.

In April, 1805, he resumed his ministerial functions at Cam-

* See, also, the note to Vol. V. p. 447.

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bridge: but, it being deemed inexpedient for him to re-occupy his house at Shelford, he engaged another at Foulmire, about nine miles from Cambridge. This spot, doubtless, was unwisely selected; as his opportunities of social intercourse with old and intimate friends were almost entirely cut off, and he was thus left to feed more upon his own thoughts than in any preceding part of his life. The evil did not shew itself in his public ministrations, which were regarded as more devout, intellectual, and impressive, than they had ever been; nor in any diminution of relish for works in which genius stood forth in defence of religious truth;—as his exquisite critique upon Foster's Essays, written at this period, amply evinces *. But the evils resulting from solitude and a return of his old pain with more than its usual severity, ere long began to shew themselves. Sleepless nights, habitual exclusion from society, a complete self-absorption, and the incessant struggle between what was due to a church and congregation which had given such signal proofs of affection for him, and what he felt to be necessary for his own preservation, a speedy removal from air and scenery that more and more impaired his health and oppressed his spirits: these, at about twelve months after his former attack at Shelford, produced a recurrence of the same malady, which again laid him aside from public duty.

He soon, however, recovered the complete balance of his mental powers, under the judicious care of the late Dr. Cox, of Fish Ponds, near Bristol. It was regarded as essential to the permanent possession of mental health and vigour, that he should resign the pastoral office at Cambridge, that he should, for a year, at least, seek retirement in a spot selected and cordially approved by himself, abstain from preaching, and, as far as possible, avoid all strong excitement.

Pursuant to this advice, he sent in his letter of resignation, which with that from the church, in reply, is inserted in the fifth volume of these works. Thus terminated a connexion which had subsisted for fifteen years, and had been of great benefit to Mr. Hall's character; while, by the divine blessing upon his labours, it had transformed a society that was rapidly sinking under the influence of cold, or disputatious, speculators, into a flourishing church and congregation, "bringing forth the fruits of righteousness," and shining in the lustre of a

* See Vol. IV. pp. 3—36.

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consistent christian profession. It is pleasing to remark that the attachment on both sides remained undiminished until Mr. Hall's death.

On recovering from this attack, he received a letter from his old friend Sir James Mackintosh, then Recorder of Bombay, which was written soon after Sir James had heard of his first indisposition. It is highly interesting, both as a memorial of genuine friendship, and as a beautiful exhibition of elevated and delicate sentiment. My insertion of it will not, however, be regarded as a proof that I entirely adopt the *theory* which the writer so elegantly sketched.

"*Bombay, Sept.* 21, 1805.

"My dear Hall,

"I believe that, in the hurry of leaving England, I did not answer the letter which you wrote to me in December, 1803. I did not, however, forget your interesting young friend, from whom I have had one letter from Constantinople, and to whom I have twice written at Cairo, where he now is. No request of *yours* could, indeed, be lightly esteemed by me.

"It happened to me a few days ago, in drawing up (merely for my own use) a short sketch of my life, that I had occasion to give a faithful statement of my recollection of the circumstances of my first acquaintance with you. On the most impartial survey of my early life, I could see nothing which tended so much to excite and invigorate my understanding, and to direct it towards high, though, perhaps, scarcely accessible objects, as my intimacy with you. Five and twenty years are now past since we first met; yet hardly any thing has occurred since, which has left a deeper or more agreeable impression on my mind. I now remember the extraordinary union of brilliant fancy with acute intellect which would have excited more admiration than it has done, if it had been dedicated to the amusement of the great and the learned, instead of being consecrated to the far more noble office of consoling, instructing, and reforming the poor and the forgotten.

"It was then too early for me to discover that extreme purity, which in a mind pre-occupied with the low realities of life, would have been no natural companion of so much activity and ardour, but which thoroughly detached you from the world, and made you the inhabitant of regions where alone it is possible to be always active without impurity, and where the ardour of your sensibility had unbounded scope amidst the inexhaustible combinations of beauty and excellence.

"It is not given to us to preserve an exact medium. Nothing

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is so difficult as to decide how much ideal models ought to be combined with experience; how much of the future should be let into the present, in the progress of the human mind. To ennoble and purify, without raising us above the sphere of our usefulness; to qualify us for what we ought to seek, without unfitting us for that to which we must submit; are great and difficult problems, which can be but imperfectly solved.

"It is certain the child may be too manly, not only for his present enjoyments, but for his future prospects. Perhaps, my good friend, you have fallen into this error of superior natures. From this error has, I think, arisen that calamity with which it has pleased Providence to visit you, which, to a mind less fortified by reason and religion, I should not dare to mention, but which I really consider in you as little more than the indignant struggles of a pure mind with the low realities which surround it,—the fervent aspirations after regions more congenial to it,—and a momentary blindness, produced by the fixed contemplation of objects too bright for human vision. I may say, in this case, in a far grander sense than that in which the words were originally spoken by our great poet,

'——————————— And yet
'The light which led astray was light from heaven.'

"On your return to us, you must surely have found consolation in the only terrestrial produce which is pure and truly exquisite; in the affections and attachments you have inspired, which you were most worthy to inspire, and which no human pollution can rob of their heavenly nature. If I were to prosecute the reflections, and indulge the feelings, which at this moment fill my mind, I should soon venture to doubt, whether, for a calamity derived from such a source, and attended with such consolations, I should so far yield to the views and opinions of men, as to seek to condole with you. But I check myself, and I exhort you, my most worthy friend, to check your best propensities, for the sake of attaining their object. You cannot live *for* men without living *with* them. Serve God then by the active service of men. Contemplate more the good you *can* do than the evil you can only lament. Allow yourself to see the loveliness of virtue amidst all its imperfections; and employ your moral imagination, not so much by bringing it into contrast with the model of ideal perfection, as in gently blending some of the fainter colours of the latter with the brighter hues of real experienced excellence; thus heightening their beauty, instead of broadening the shade which must surround us till we awaken from this dream in other spheres of existence.

"My habits of life have not been favourable to this train of medi-

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tation. I have been too busy or too trifling. My nature perhaps would have been better consulted if I had been placed in a *quieter* station, where speculation might have been my business, and visions of the fair and good my chief recreation. When I approach you, I feel a powerful attraction towards this which seems the natural destiny of my mind; but habit opposes obstacles, and duty calls me off, and reason frowns on him who wastes that reflection on a destiny independent of him, which he ought to reserve for actions of which he is the master.

"In another letter I may write to you on miscellaneous subjects; at present I cannot bring my mind to speak of them. Let me hear from you soon and often.

"Farewell, my dear friend.

"Yours ever most faithfully,

"JAMES MACKINTOSH."

Two visitations of so humiliating a calamity within the compass of a year deeply affected Mr. Hall's mind. Happily, however, for himself and for the world, his spirits soon recovered their wonted tone; and the permanent impression on his character was exclusively religious. His own decided persuasion was that, however vivid his convictions of religious truth, and of the necessity of a consistent course of evangelical obedience had formerly been, and however correct his doctrinal sentiments during the last four or five years, yet that he did not undergo a thorough transformation of character, a complete renewal of his heart and affections, until the first of these seizures. Some of his Cambridge friends, who visited him at Shelford, previously to his removal to Dr. Arnold's, and witnessed his deep prostration of soul while he read the fifty-first psalm, and made each verse the subject of penitent confession and of a distinct prayer, were rather inclined to concur with him as to the correctness of the opinion. Be this, however, as it may (and the wonderful revelations of "the great day" can alone remove the doubt), there can be no question that from this period he seemed more to live under the prevailing recollection of his entire dependence upon God, that his habits were more devotional than they had ever before been, his exercises more fervent and more elevated.

In a letter written to his friend Mr. Phillips, of Clapham, after his recovery, he thus adverts to his afflictions:

"I cannot look back upon the events which have befallen me, without admiration and gratitude. I am a monument of the goodness

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and of the severity of God. My sufferings have been extreme, and the kindness of God, in interposing in my behalf, unspeakable. Pray for me, my dear friend, that I may retain an indelible sense of the mercies received, and that the inconceivable afflictions I have undergone may 'work for me the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' I am often afraid lest it should be with me as with the ancient Israelites, who, after they had sung the praises of God, 'soon forgot his works.' O! that a life so signally redeemed from destruction, may be as signally employed in that which is alone the true end of life, the service of God. But my heart is 'like a deceitful bow,' continually prone to turn aside; so that nothing but the powerful impulse of divine grace can fix it in a right aim."

At this time, I believe, Mr. Hall, under the persuasion to which I have just alluded, made a solemn dedication of himself to God, renewing the act annually on the recurrence of his birth-day. One of these touching and impressive records, which has been found among his papers, will, I feel assured, be read with deep interest.

"An Act of solemn Dedication of myself to God.

"O Lord, thou that searchest the heart and triest the reins of the children of men, be thou the witness of what I am now about, in the strength of thy grace, to attempt: that grace I humbly and earnestly implore, to give validity and effect to that act of solemn engagement of myself to thy service, on which I am about to enter. 'Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are none of them hid from thee.' 'I was born in sin, and in iniquity did my mother conceive me.' I am an apostate, guilty branch of an apostate guilty root, and my life has been a series of rebellions and transgressions, in which I have walked 'according to the course of this world; according to the Prince of the power of the air, the *spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*' How shall I confess my transgressions before thee; what numbers can reach; what words can adequately express them! '*My iniquities have increased over my head, and my transgressions have grown up unto Heaven.*' O Lord, I esteem it a wonderful mercy that I have not long since been cut off in the midst of my sins, and been sent to hell before I had an opportunity or a heart to repent. Being assured from the word of God of thy gracious and merciful nature, and of thy willingness to pardon and accept penitent

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believing sinners on the ground of the blood and righteousness of thine own adorable Son, 'who died, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God,' and that 'him that cometh to him he will in nowise cast out,' I do most humbly prostrate myself at the footstool of his cross, and through him enter into thy covenant. I disclaim all right to myself from henceforth, to my soul, my body, my time, my health, my reputation, my talents, or any thing that belongs to me. I confess myself to be the property of the glorious Redeemer, as one whom I humbly hope he has redeemed by his blood to be part of 'the first fruits of his creatures.'

"I do most cheerfully and cordially receive him in all his offices, as my Priest, my Prophet, and my King. I dedicate myself to him, to serve, love, and trust in him as my life and my salvation to my life's end.

"I renounce the Devil and all his works, the flesh, and the world, with heartfelt regret that I should have been enslaved by them so long. I do solemnly and deliberately take thee to be my full and satisfying good, and eternal portion in and through thine adorable Son the Redeemer, and by the assistance of the blessed Spirit of all grace, the third person in the triune God, whom I take to be my Sanctifier and Comforter to the end of time, and through a happy eternity, praying that the Holy Spirit may deign to take perpetual possession of my heart and fix his abode there.

"I do most solemnly devote and give up myself to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, agreeably to the terms of the Gospel covenant, and in humble expectation of the blessings it ascertains to sincere believers. I call thee to witness, O God! the truth and reality of this surrender of all I have, and all I am, to thee; and, conscious of the unspeakable deceitfulness of my heart, I humbly and earnestly implore the influence of thy Spirit to enable me to stand steadfast in this covenant, as well as an interest in the blood of the Son, that I may be forgiven in those instances (alas! that such an idea should be possible,) in which I may, in any degree, swerve from it.

"Done this [2d] day of May, 1809, seven o'clock in the evening, Leicester. ROBERT HALL."

Mr. Hall, on his removal from Dr. Cox's, spent some months among his relatives and friends in Leicestershire. At Arnsby

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he retraced the scenes of his youth, often visited the grave-yard, which would naturally awaken many interesting recollections of his early life, and on these occasions he has more than once been seen kneeling at his father's grave engaged in earnest prayer. He afterwards resided, for a time, at Enderby, a pleasant and sequestered village, five miles from Leicester, where, by the united influence of calm retirement and gentle spontaneous occupation, he gradually regained his bodily health with great mental tranquillity, and a renewed capacity for usefulness in the church.

His friends, Dr. Ryland and Mr. Fuller, persuaded of the benefits that would flow from drawing his attention to a specific object, requested him to investigate the critical peculiarities of some difficult texts in the New Testament, respecting which Dr. Marshman had asked the opinion of his friends in England. This judicious application directed his thoughts to some of his old and favourite inquiries, and produced the most salutary effects.* From this he passed to other literary occupations, thence to closer biblical study, and, in due time, when his strength and self-possession were adequately restored to permit the exertion without injury, he returned to the delightful work of "proclaiming the good tidings of peace."

He first preached in some of the villages around him; and then, occasionally, to a small congregation assembling at a chapel in Harvey Lane, Leicester, which had several years before been under the care of that eminent man, Dr. Carey, now of Serampore. The congregation had been diminishing for some years, and at this time did not exceed two hundred and fifty: the church consisted of seventy-six members. After having preached to them a few months, he accepted an invitation to become their stated pastor; and his ministerial labours were soon followed by tokens of good. "The people," said he, in a letter to Dr. Ryland, "are a simple-hearted, affectionate, pray-"ing, people, to whom I preach with more pleasure than to the "more refined audience at Cambridge. We have had, through

* For more than two years he employed much time in a critical examination of the New Testament, and in arranging such corrected translations as he deemed important, with short reasons for his deviating from the authorized version; intending to publish the whole in a pamphlet of about one hundred pages. Just as he had finished this work, he for the first time saw Macknight's new translation of the Apostolic Epistles; and finding himself anticipated in many of the corrections which he thought most valuable, destroyed his manuscript.

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" mercy, some small addition, and hope for more. Our meet-
" ings in general, our prayer meetings in particular, are well
" attended."

With this church he continued connected nearly twenty years. The church and congregation steadily increased during that long interval, and scarcely any thing of moment occurred to interrupt their internal peace. The place of worship, which when Mr. Hall first settled there would not conveniently hold four hundred persons, was enlarged in 1809 for the reception of about eight hundred; and in 1817 a second enlargement rendered it capable of accommodating a thousand persons. In 1826, at the close of Mr. Hall's labours there, the place was comfortably filled, and the members of the church, besides those who it is believed had gone to their eternal reward, amounted to nearly three hundred. More than a hundred of those who constituted the evening congregation were pious members of the church of England.

In the autumn of 1807 Mr. Hall removed from Enderby to a house in Leicester, which he engaged partly that he might more conveniently associate with the people of his charge, and partly in anticipation of his marriage, which took place in March, 1808. This event gave great and sincere satisfaction to his old and intimate friends, most of whom had long regretted that one so evidently formed for domestic enjoyments, should for so many years have lived without attaining them; and had no doubt, indeed, that an earlier marriage would, by checking his propensity to incessant retirement and mental abstraction, have preserved him from the heavy afflictions which had befallen him. As Mrs. Hall still lives to mourn the loss of her incomparable husband, I must not permit myself more than to testify how highly he estimated her kindness and affection, and how often, in his conversation, as well as in his letters, he expressed his gratitude to God for giving him so pious, prudent, and devoted a wife. Of their five children, three daughters and one son survive. Another son died in 1814.*

Mr. Hall's residence at Leicester was not only of longer continuance than at any other place, but I doubt not that it was the period in which he was most happy, active, and useful. His domestic comfort at once contributed to a more uniform flow of spirits than he had for some time experienced, and

* See Vol. V. p. 487.

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greatly to the regularity of his habits. The increase both of attentive hearers, and of the number among them who were admitted to church-fellowship, supplied constant reason for encouragement and thankfulness. He was also within the reach of ministers and others, of different persuasions, men of decided piety, and some of them of considerable attainments, who knew how to appreciate the extraordinary advantages of frequent intercourse with such an individual; thus yielding him the delight of an interchange of soul and sentiment, besides that fruit of friendship so aptly characterized by Lord Bacon:—"Whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating and discoursing with another—he tosseth his thoughts more easily—he marshalleth them more orderly—he seeth how they look when they are turned into words—and he waxeth wiser than himself, often more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation."*

Leicester, from its situation in the heart of the midland counties, as well as from its importance in a leading inland manufacture, was the centre of influence and operation to a considerable distance around; and the concurrence of many favourable circumstances had rendered it the centre also of a religious influence, and of religious operations, diffusing themselves incessantly with a new and growing impulse. To this the zeal and activity of the late Rev. Thomas Robinson of Leicester, and of Mr. Hall's father, had greatly contributed; and many clergymen and dissenting ministers in Leicestershire and the neighbouring counties, were, in their respective fields of labour, instrumental in producing the most cheering and successful results. The attention of the christian world had been recently invited, or, I might perhaps say, *summoned*, to promote the noble objects of Missionary Societies, Bible Societies,

* Mr. Hall, however, from the midway position of Leicester between London, and the large towns in Lancashire and Yorkshire, was much exposed to interruptions. (See Vol. V. p. 550.) Many persons who had but a slight acquaintance with him, would invariably spend a day at Leicester, in their way from London to Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, &c., or from either of those places to London, that they might, during the greater part of it, enjoy his society; and, though he often felt this to be a real annoyance, yet such was his feeling of what was due to strangers in point of courtesy, that it was not until he had sustained the inconvenience for almost twenty years, that he would consent that this class of visitors should be informed he would not be at leisure to see them until evening.

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Sunday and other Schools for the instruction of the poor; and the summons had been obeyed in a universality and cordiality of vigorous Christian effort, and in a spirit of conciliation and harmony, such as the world had not yet known. Placed in the midst of so extensive a sphere of benevolent and sacred influence, Mr. Hall was soon roused to a measure of activity and a diversity of employment to which he had hitherto been a stranger. The Bible Society at Leicester, Missionary Societies there and all around, asked and received his aid; and these, with the different public services of frequent occurrence among orthodox dissenters, gave occasion to the happiest exercise of his varied powers.

His religious character thus became correctly estimated by a much larger portion of the community. Instead of being known chiefly to men of reading and taste, as an author who had appeared before the world on a few momentous occasions, and, after a striking exhibition of intellectual and moral energy, had hastened back to his retirement, he now became much more known and revered as the correct and eloquent interpreter of the Christian faith, the intrepid assertor of its infinite superiority to all human systems of philosophy or morals. Long had he been admired by the intelligent as a great man; the circumstances in which he now moved with so much philanthropic ardour, caused him to be regarded, not merely by these, but by pious men of every persuasion, as a good man, rejoicing to consecrate his best faculties to the specific objects of the Christian ministry, and such purposes of enlarged exertion as were fully compatible with his holy calling.

Nor were these efforts, and this high estimate of their value, confined to the field of activity he thus occupied. He had, on quitting Bristol in 1791, consented to spend a few weeks with his friends there, every two years. He had, also, made a similar arrangement for visiting Cambridge, where the members of his former congregation had peculiar claims upon him. Although his invariable dread of notoriety, and his dislike of the bustle of the metropolis, caused his visits there to be "few and far between," yet they occurred sufficiently often to excite almost universally the highest admiration of his singular qualities as a preacher, and to convince many who previously had contemplated the evangelical system of religion with great disrelish, that it was the *only* foundation of elevated morality, and that its

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cordial adoption was not necessarily repugnant to genius, learning, and intellectual cultivation.

Wherever he went, he was called to address overflowing congregations, and commonly of a remarkably mixed character. Churchmen and dissenters; men of rank and influence, individuals in lower stations; men of simple piety, and others of deep theological knowledge; men who admired Christianity as a beautiful system, and those who received it into the heart by faith; men in doubt, others involved in unbelief:—all resorted to the place where he was announced as the preacher. Frequently he was apprized of this peculiarity in the structure of the auditory, and, whenever that was the case, the striking appropriation of the sermon to the assembly was always manifest. Of this the reader will have ample evidence in the sermons inserted in this volume, many of which were delivered on public occasions.*

Mr. Hall's writings during his residence at Leicester, though by no means numerous, tended greatly to augment his influence upon society.

The first of these was published anonymously in the Eclectic Review, but left no room for hesitation as to its author. It was a critique upon a pamphlet entitled "Zeal without Innovation," which he undertook at the earnest entreaty of the late Mr. Robinson of Leicester, "who, in common with all the serious clergy in those parts, disapproved the pamphlet highly."† As it is no part of my intention to present elaborate accounts of Mr. Hall's successive publications, it may suffice for me to remark with regard to this critique, that while it places the

* That the reader may not suspect I over-rate the impression made by Mr. Hall upon those who were not his intimates, nor had fully adopted his scheme of theology, I insert in Appendix, Note C, the late Mr. John Scott's elegant and discriminating sketch of his powers as a preacher and writer.

While this sheet was going through the press, I accidentally found among some old letters, one from a friend residing in France, in which there was the following allusion to Mr. Hall by a French protestant clergyman, who was visiting Bristol in Sept. 1822. In a letter addressed to another protestant minister, Mr. Kerpezdron, of Aulnay, he says,

"I heard Mr. Robert Hall of Leicester, last Tuesday morning; but his sermon was so great, so good, so eloquent, so simple, so pious, in a word, so complete a piece of pulpit oratory, that I cannot tell you any thing about it, except that it has made an indelible impression on my mind. I thought when I came out, that I never could preach again."

† See Vol. V. p. 457.

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controversy between the puritans and their opponents in a flood of light, and exhibits the essential importance of religious liberty to the growth, if not in some cases, to the existence, of genuine, devotional, christianity; it presents a more admirable picture of the character of the Evangelical Clergy,* a more powerful, liberal, and successful defence of their object and conduct, than has been, as yet, accomplished by any other person. Many regard it as among the most instructive and useful, as well as among the most masterly, of Mr. Hall's productions. It abounds in keen satire, in irrefragable argument, in touching description, in tasteful imagery, in exquisite diction, and in sentiments of a weight and worth only to be fully estimated by men whose minds are elevated above the prejudices which tie us down to sects and parties, and can rejoice at the extension of true religion, among persons of any persuasion, or through the instrumentality of whomsoever the Great Head of the Church may employ.† The value set by the public upon this disquisition, was evinced in the rapid sale of three editions, in a separate pamphlet, independently of its circulation in the Review.

Of the sermons published by Mr. Hall during his residence at Leicester, the first was preached in behalf of the Sunday School connected with his own congregation, and appeared under the title of "The Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes." The subject is not precisely adapted to the decorations of eloquence; for the deplorable effects of ignorance and the blessings of knowledge are best exhibited in the detail of facts, which admit of no embellishment. Mr. Hall's desire to enlarge the capacity for enjoyment among the lower classes, as well as to promote their highest welfare, tempted him, however, to enter this region of common-places, and thus gave a fresh opportunity of shewing how an original thinker can communicate an air of freshness to a worn-out topic, bring up to the surface arguments and illustrations that lie far below the reach of ordinary reasoners, and enforce them with a warmth and energy calculated equally to impress and to convince.‡

* I use this term to avoid a periphrasis, and because it is intelligible and strictly characteristic.

† See Vol. IV. pp. 46—125.

‡ This sermon, as well as his two able pamphlets on the "Frame-work Knitter's

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The two next sermons are of a much higher order. One of them, on "The Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister," was addressed to the Rev. James Robertson, on his ordination over the Independent Church at Stretton, Warwickshire; the other, which portrays the duties, discouragements, and supports "of the Christian Missionary," was addressed to the Rev. Eustace Carey, on his designation as a missionary to India. In these the author traces with a master hand the various sources of discouragement and consolation, which appertain to the respective offices of the minister and the missionary. Like one intimately acquainted with comparative anatomy, he exhibits the points of agreement, as well as those of diversity in the different subjects, with the most convincing discrimination; while conversant, as well with the morbid as the healthy anatomy of the subjects before him, he explores to its inmost recess, that universal moral disease which calls forth the efforts of both Ministers and Missionaries, and then (where the analogy must drop) he reveals the principles and the origin of an infallible cure. Both these addresses are remarkable for their originality and variety; every topic successively advanced is irradiated with eloquence, and glows with feeling; and so skilfully are both the discourses conducted, that, while they are avowedly directed to the minister and the missionary, and abound in the most valuable instructions to them respectively, the private christian, who reads with devout attention, may derive from them as rich instruction for himself, and as many directions for his own religious improvement, as though they were specifically addressed to him alone. This, indeed, was a decided characteristic of Mr. Hall's sermons. He who heard, or he who read, would find his astonishment and admiration strongly excited; but

Fund," and in "Reply to Cobbett and others," (Vol. III. pp. 234—297,) should be regarded as flowing entirely from his benevolence. This, with him, had never been a fleeting sentiment in occasional operation, but one that was permanently fed by christian principles. It was, however, greatly extended, to adopt his own language, "by those impressions of tenderness, gratitude, and sympathy, which the endearments of domestic life supply," and led him to investigate the actual circumstances of the neighbouring poor, and constantly to aim at the alleviation of their distress. Not long after his marriage, when his own pecuniary resources were much restricted, he proposed to fast on certain days that he might have it in his power to distribute more among the needy: and he thought it wrong to have more than two coats when so many persons around him were clothed in mere rags.

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often, if not always, the more his emotion was enkindled by the preacher, the more forcibly was he compelled to retire to "the chambers of imagery," and examine his own heart.

The sudden and untimely death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, was an event calculated to make the deepest impression upon a mind constituted like Mr. Hall's. The illustrious rank of the victim, her youth and recent marriage, the affecting nature of the catastrophe, its probable influence upon the reigning monarch, upon the succession to the throne, and the welfare of the nation even to distant ages; all presented themselves to his thoughts with the most heart-stirring energy. He preached three sermons on the occasion, of which many of the auditors affirm, the one published was by no means the best. It, however, by universal acknowledgement, bore the palm above all the numerous valuable sermons that were then published. It embraces the various topics that would occur to a man of piety, feeling, and excursive thought, on the contemplation of such an event,—the mysteriousness of God's providence, the vicissitudes of empires, the aggravated poignancy of sudden calamity to individuals of elevated station, "the uncertainty of life, the frailty of youth, the evanescence of beauty, the nothingness of worldly greatness," the blindness of man to futurity, "the human race itself withering" away, and the perpetuity of God's promises as the great and noble contrast to universal fragility;—these are touched in succession with the utmost tenderness, beauty, and sublimity. In felicity of diction, in delicacy and pathos, in the rich variety of most exquisite and instructive trains of thought, in their cogent application to truths of the utmost moment, in the masterly combination of what in eloquence, philosophy, and religion, was best calculated to make a permanent and salutary impression, this sermon probably stands unrivalled.

Besides the various sermons and reviews which he wrote and published, during his residence at Leicester, he composed for circulation among the associated Baptist churches in the counties of Northampton, Leicester, and Warwick, two tracts on the Work of the Holy Spirit, and on Hearing the Word; both deeply imbued with simple evangelical truth, and rich in excellent practical remarks, fitted for the beneficial perusal of all classes. There were also other compositions which he executed with singular felicity. I mean, his biographical

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sketches. They are, except the rapid but exquisite sketches of Brainerd, Fletcher of Madeley, and Henry Martyn, the delineations *of a friend;* and, perhaps, in a few particulars, need a slight allowance for the high colouring to which the warmth of friendship tempts us when meditating upon departed excellence; yet they are, on the whole, exact in the resemblance, and finely exemplify the author's varied powers, especially his delicate and accurate discrimination of the degrees and shades of human character.

One of these, the character of the Rev. John Sutcliff, is an unfinished portrait; Mr. Hall, after a few unsatisfactory trials, relinquishing the attempt. The following letter to Mr. Fuller, on the occasion of this failure, will be read with interest, as an example both of his diffidence and of his sense of the obligation of a promise.

"My dear Brother,

"I am truly concerned to tell you that I cannot succeed at all in my attempts to draw the character of our dear and venerable brother Sutcliff. I have made several efforts, and have sketched, as well as I could, the outlines of what I conceive to be his character; but have failed in producing such a portrait as appears to me fit for the public eye. I am perfectly convinced that your intimacy with him, and your powers of discrimination, will enable you to present to posterity a much juster and more impressive idea of him than I can. I am heartily sorry I promised it. But promises I hold sacred; and, therefore, if you insist upon it, and are not willing to release me from my engagement, I will accomplish the task as well as I can. But, if you will let the matter pass *sub silentio*, without reproaching me, you will oblige me considerably. It appears to me that, if I ever possessed a faculty of character-drawing, I have lost it, probably for want of use; as I am far from taking any delight in a minute criticism on character, to which, in my younger days, I was excessively addicted. Both our tastes and talents change with the progress of years. The purport of these lines, however, is to request you to absolve me from my promise, in which light I shall interpret your silence; holding myself ready, however, to comply with your injunctions.

"I am, my dear Sir,

"Your affectionate Brother,

"*Sept.* 1814." "R. Hall.

For several years, about this time, Mr. Hall's thoughts were greatly occupied upon the subject of "Terms of Communion."

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His first publication in reference to it appeared in 1815: but they who were admitted to his intimacy, will recollect how often, three or four years before its appearance, he advocated a cautious revision of the practice of nearly all churches; and how successfully he refuted the arguments of those who favoured any narrow system of exclusion. He regarded the existence of a principle which made so many churches points of repulsion instead of centres of union, as a very serious evil; and often deplored it in language similar to that which commences his first production on the subject *.

The discussion, indeed, is neither of slight, nor of temporary interest. It involves the prevailing practice of every church in christendom, whether established, or independent of an establishment; and it includes an answer to the inquiry how purity of faith and conduct shall be preserved, without an infringement of the principles requisite to make *every* church a portion of that sublime invisible society, the "Church Universal," constituted of all the members of Christ's mystical body.

Rapidly approaching, as we seem to be, to that state of things, when all churches, national as well as others, will feel the expediency, if not the necessity, of reverting to first principles in modifying and improving their several communities, the controversy on "Terms of Communion" forces itself upon the attention as one of primary importance, serving to ascertain and determine almost every question of value in reference to ecclesiastical polity.

I thus, though but for a moment, advert to this controversy, that the general reader may not be induced to undervalue it. It occupies the greater portion of the second volume of these works, besides the substance of a distinct pamphlet inserted in the third volume. Of the different writers who opposed Mr. Hall on this occasion, Mr. Kinghorn was, unquestionably, the most acute and learned. His volume should be read, in connexion with Mr. Hall's, by such as wish to view the question in all its bearings. Mr. Hall's part of the controversy is conducted with his characteristic frankness and decision; and evinces the same clearness, copiousness, strength and majesty of diction, as he uniformly displayed upon every subject to which he bent his mind with all its power. Sometimes when a narrow, illiberal sentiment, calculated to check

* See Vol. II. pp. 9, 10.

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Sir, with great esteem,
" Yours most affectionately,
" R. HALL."

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separate churches: that, having no conscientious objection to kneeling at the sacrament, and having resolved never to communicate even occasionally but where he had reason to believe the bulk of those who partook of the sacrament were real christians, he felt no hesitation as to the propriety, while he could speak decidedly as to the comfort, of the course he had pursued. He stated, farther, that with Richard Baxter he "disowned the principle of many who think their presence "maketh them guilty of all that is faulty in the public "worship and ministration: for this dissolveth all worshipping "churches on earth, without exception;" that he considered Baxter's Refutation of Dr. Owen's arguments against occasional communion as complete; and that he would rather err in the spirit of Baxter and Howe, on such a question, than be right according to the narrow measures by which too many would enforce a contrary practice. Mr. Hall's reply, which is subjoined, exemplifies his usual manner of guarding against a misapprehension of the real extent of his agreement with another, upon any disputed point.

"6 *March*, 1818.

"My dear Friend,

"I am much obliged to you for the frankness with which you have answered my inquiries. Perhaps I may not be quite prepared to go with you the full extent of your moderation; though on this I have by no means made up my mind. I admire the spirit with which you are actuated, and esteem you more than ever for the part you have acted. I perfectly agree with you that *the old grounds* of dissent are the true ones, and that our recent apologists have mixed up too much of a political cast in their reasonings upon this subject. Though I should deprecate the founding of *any established* church, in the popular sense of that term, I think it very injudicious to lay that as the corner-stone of dissent. We have much stronger ground in the *specific* corruptions of the church of England, ground which our pious ancestors occupied, and which may safely defy every attempt of the most powerful and acute minds to subvert. With respect to occasional conformity, I by no means think it involves an abandonment of dissent; and I am inclined to think that, were I in a private station, (not a minister, I mean,) I should, under certain circumstances, and in certain situations, be disposed to practise it; though nothing would induce me to acknowledge myself a permanent member of the church of England.

"In regard to episcopacy, it appears to me entirely a human,

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though certainly a very early, invention. It was unknown, I believe, in the apostolical times; with the exception, probably, of the latter part of John's time. But, as it was practised in the second and third centuries, I should have no conscientious objection to it. As it subsists *at present* among us, I am sorry to say I can scarcely conceive a greater [abuse]. It subverts equally the rights of pastors and of people, and is nothing less than one of the worst relics of the papal hierarchy. Were every thing else what it ought to be in the established church, prelacy, as it now subsists, would make me a decided dissenter.

* * * * * *

"I remain, my dear Sir, with great esteem,

"Yours most affectionately,

"R. HALL."

Mr. Hall's engagements for the press, numerous and heavy as they were, to one who wrote with so much difficulty and pain, did not draw him aside from pastoral watchfulness over his church and congregation; nor were they permitted to shorten those hours of retirement in which he sought "converse with God." Nothing, on the contrary, was more evident than his increased spirit of devotion as he advanced in life. About the year 1812, he commenced the practice of setting apart one day in a month for especial prayer and fasting. On these occasions he retired into his study immediately after the morning domestic worship, and remained there until the evening. Finding this eminently conducive to his own comfort, at the end of about two years he recommended the church to hold quarterly fasts. They at once adopted the recommendation; and some of the members often speak of the first meeting for this purpose, as a most extraordinary season of devout and solemn feeling.

About the same time, or somewhat earlier, he announced his opinion of the disadvantage arising from the presence of others besides the communicants on sacramental occasions. In a short address he explained the customs of the early Christians with regard to the Lord's Supper, and shewed that the admission of spectators, who were not members of the church, during the celebration, was comparatively a modern innovation. He pointed out the inconclusiveness of the ordinary arguments,—that spectators often receive benefit from the addresses of the ministers, and that therefore their exclusion was cutting them

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off from good, and that such exclusion was an infringement of religious liberty. He also stated that the presence of such spectators deprived him of much comfort during the communion service, and that he should regard their keeping away as a personal kindness to himself. His address was received with affectionate respect; and from that time, those who had previously remained to witness the administration discontinued the custom.

Some time after the conclusion of his part of the controversy on "Terms of Communion," he made an effort to persuade the church at Harvey Lane to adopt the practice of "mixed communion;" but, finding that it would disturb the peace which had so long subsisted in the society, he relinquished his intention, and recommended the formation of a distinct church on the mixed communion principle, its sacramental service being held on the morning of the same sabbath on which the "strict communion" church held its corresponding service in the afternoon. This plan was adopted and followed during Mr. Hall's continuance at Leicester, without causing any interruption of the harmony which prevailed among the different classes of worshippers.

In the year 1823, the minister of a Unitarian congregation at Leicester, having delivered a series of what are usually denominated "Challenge Lectures," in defence of his own opinions, to hear which individuals of other persuasions were publicly invited, Mr. Hall felt it to be his duty to offer a timely antidote to the evil. He, therefore, preached twelve lectures on the points at issue, and had the happiness to know that they were serviceable in checking the diffusion of Socinian error. His concise outline of these lectures, as well as fuller notes of two or three, are inserted in the fifth volume. He was strongly urged by several members of his congregation, and by various neighbouring ministers, to publish the whole; but uniformly replied, that though he believed they had been beneficial, he was conscious they contained nothing that could be regarded as really new in the controversy; and that Dr. Wardlaw had so admirably occupied the ground in his sermons, already before the public, that any thing which he could offer in print would only be regarded as an impertinent intrusion.

Throughout the whole of Mr. Hall's residence at Leicester, he suffered much from his constitutional complaint; and neither

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his habit of smoking, nor that of taking laudanum,* seemed effectually to alleviate his sufferings. It was truly surprising that this constant severe pain, and the means adopted to mitigate it, did not in any measure diminish his mental energy. A little difference was, perhaps, discernible in the vivacity of his conversation; but his preaching had, as yet, lost nothing of its force. In letters to his friends he expressed a hope that "a greater savour of Jesus Christ accompanied his ministry;" and remarked, that "his strain of preaching was much less "elegant, but more intended for instruction, for awakening "conviction, and carrying home truth with power to the heart." And thus it was found, that, as he advanced in years, though there might be a *little* less of elaboration and polish, there was more of spiritual feeling, more of tender and earnest expostulation, and of that pungency of application to the heart and conscience, which resulted from an enlarged acquaintance with human character, and a deeper knowledge of "the things of God." That the divine blessing accompanied these labours, and in many cases rendered the impression permanent, the history of the church and congregation abundantly proves.

The death of Dr. Ryland in 1825 led to Mr. Hall's invitation to take the pastoral office over the church at Broadmead, Bristol, an office which had been long and honourably sustained by that excellent individual. After some months spent in anxious deliberation, in advising with his friends, and seeking counsel from above, from the dread he felt lest he "should rush into "a sphere of action to which he was not called, and offend "God by deserting his proper post," he at length decided to dissolve his long and happy connexion with the church at Leicester. The day of separation, the last sacrament sabbath, March 26th, 1826, was a day of anguish to him and them, of which I shall not attempt the description. Suffice it to say, that he went through the ordinary public duties of the day with tolerable composure;† but at the sacramental service he

* In 1812 he took from fifty to one hundred drops every night. Before 1826 the quantity had increased to one thousand drops.

† In order that neither his feelings nor those of the congregation might be too severely tried, during the public services, he preached two sermons for the Baptist Mission:—That in the morning from Ephes. iii. 8. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ:"—That in the evening, from Matt. vi. 10. "Thy kingdom come."

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strove in vain to conceal his emotion. In one of his addresses to the members of the church, on adverting to the pain of separation, he was so much affected that he sat down, covered his face with his hands, and wept; they sharing in his distress, gave unequivocal signs of the deepest feeling. Mr. Eustace Carey, who was present, continued the devotional part of the service, until Mr. Hall was sufficiently recovered to proceed. At the close of the solemnity the weeping became again universal, and they parted "sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more."

Very shortly afterwards the church received from Mr. Hall the following letter of resignation:

To the Church of Christ meeting in Harvey-Lane, Leicester.

"*3d April*, 1826.

"My dear Brethren and Sisters,

"I take this opportunity of solemnly and affectionately resigning the pastoral charge which I have long sustained among you, and of expressing, at the same time, the deep sense I shall ever retain of the marks of affection and esteem, with which, both collectively and individually, you have honoured me.

"Though the providence of God has, as I conceive, called me to labour in another part of his vineyard, my solicitude for your spiritual welfare will ever remain unimpaired, nor will any thing give me more joy than to hear of your growth in grace, peace, and prosperity. My prayer will never cease to ascend to the God of all comfort, that he will establish your hearts in love, unite you more and more in the fellowship of saints, and make you fruitful in every good work.

"Let me earnestly intreat you to guard most anxiously against whatever may tend to weaken your union, diminish your affection, or embitter your spirits against each other. 'Let brotherly love continue:' 'Seek peace and pursue it:' and, 'may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, stablish, strengthen, settle, and make you perfect.'

"I hope that, in the choice of a successor, you will earnestly and anxiously seek divine direction; prefer the useful to the splendid; the solid to the glittering and shewy; and be supplied with a pastor who will, in doctrine, exhibit 'uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, and sound speech which cannot be condemned,' and be in manner and behaviour a pattern to believers.

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"Permit me, on this occasion, to return you my sincere acknowledgements for the uniform kindness with which you have treated me, the respectful attention you have paid to my ministry, and the candour with which you have borne my infirmities.

"With my most earnest prayers for your spiritual and eternal welfare, I remain,

"My dear Brethren and Sisters,

"Your obliged and affectionate friend and brother,

"ROBERT HALL."

Mr. Hall was in his sixty-second year when he removed to Bristol, the scene of his first continuous labours, and now to become the scene of his closing ministry. Some of the friends of his early life still survived to welcome his return among them; and many others, who had profited by his pulpit exertions on his periodical visits to Bristol, congratulated themselves that he to whom, under God, they owed so much, had become their pastor. All things indeed, except his infirm state of health, seemed to conspire in promoting his own happiness as well as the prosperity of the Church with which he had again connected himself.

The church and congregation soon received numerous accessions. In writing to a friend, early in 1829, he says, "I "continue to be very happy with my people, from whom I "daily receive every demonstration of affection and respect. "Our attendance is as good as I could wish; and we have "added to the *Baptist* church, during the last year, twenty-"seven, and six are standing candidates for baptism. For "these tokens of the divine presence I desire to be thankful."

His heavenly Father, during the concluding years of his life, made a rich provision for his social enjoyments, both in his family, and among his friends. Besides the comfort of frequent association with many of his own flock, his pleasures were greatly heightened by intercourse with Mr. Foster, and the tutors of the Baptist Academy, as well as with several clergymen and other ministers, and laymen, residing in Bristol and its vicinity. It is true, that wherever he went, or in whatever he engaged, he carried with him the complaint from which he had suffered so much and so long. It had become, as his esteemed friend Mr. Addington termed it, "an internal apparatus of torture;" yet, such was the peculiar structure of his mind, doubtless fortified and prepared for patient endurance

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by an energy imparted from above, that though his appointment by day and by night was incessant pain, yet high *enjoyment* was, notwithstanding, the law of his existence.

Between his final removal to Bristol, and his death, he visited his friends at Cambridge twice, namely, in 1827 and 1829. These visits were undertaken with the sense of responsibility of one who had formerly been their pastor: and he made it a rule so to arrange his time while there, as to see, converse with, and exhort, every member of the church, and a great proportion of the congregation. He paid also one visit to his recently quitted flock at Leicester; and two to his friends in London. On these occasions the anxiety to hear him preach was as great as it had ever been; while his sermons were characterized in a high degree by the qualities that had long distinguished them,—with the addition of a stronger manifestation of religious and benevolent affections, a still more touching persuasiveness of manner, continued with an increasing intensity of feeling, with deeper and deeper solemnity of appeal; the entire effect being greatly augmented by the sudden introduction, just as the last sentence seemed dropping from his lips, of some new topic of application or of caution, most urgently pressed; as though he *could* not cease to invite, to warn, to expostulate, until the "Great Master of Assemblies" vouchsafed to him the assurance that he had not been pleading his cause in vain.*

Mr. Hall's increasing infirmities did not extinguish his literary ardour, or abate his love of reading. Except during the first years of his residence at Cambridge, reading, and the thinking it called forth, were his incessant occupation to the very close of life; and both the pursuit, and its application to the benefit of others, yielded him the highest delight. In his early life, as I have already mentioned, it was common with him to carry on five or six different courses of study, simultaneously. But for the last ten or twelve years, he mostly confined himself to one book at a time, and read it to the end. His reading continued to be very extensive and varied, (for it was his decided opinion that every species of knowledge might be

* It was seldom that the friends who attempted to take down Mr. Hall's sermons did not unconsciously relinquish writing as he approached the close. The reader, however, who never had the privilege of hearing him preach, will be able to form *some* conception of his impressive terminations, from the last ten pages of the sermon in the present volume, on "the Glory of God in concealing."

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rendered subservient to religion,) but his predilection, next to the Scriptures, was for works of clear, strong, and conclusive reasoning, though conveyed in language far from elevated, and sometimes perhaps obscure. Thus he, for full sixty years, read Jonathan Edwards's writings with undiminished pleasure. And of Chillingworth's "Religion of Protestants," he has often been known to say, "It is just like reading a novel:" which indeed, was his usual expression of commendation, with regard to such works of a dry or abstract nature, as discovered subtilty, depth, or vigour of thought. In this class he placed the works of Jeremy Bentham, for whom he entertained the highest estimation, as an original, profound, and accurate thinker; observing often, that in the particular province of his speculations, the science of legislation, he had advanced to the limits of reason; and that if *he* were compelled to legislate for the world upon uninspired principles, "he should take Bentham, and go from "state to state with as firm a step as though he walked upon "a pavement of adamant."*

If, at any time, he could not settle a point of interest without studying a language of which he was ignorant, that constituted no impediment. Shortly before he quitted Leicester, a friend found him one morning, very early, lying on the carpet, with an Italian dictionary and a volume of Dante, before him. Being about to quit the room, he said, "No, Sir, don't go. I will tell you what I have been about "for some weeks. A short time since I was greatly de- "lighted with a parallel between the Paradise Lost, and the "Divine Comedy of Dante, which I read in the Edinburgh "Review. But in matters of taste, as well as others, I always "like to judge for myself; and so I have been studying Italian. "I have caught the idiom, and am reading Dante with great "relish; though I cannot yet say, with Milton,

"'Now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly or I can run.'"

It may seem somewhat out of place, yet I shall be forgiven if I here insert an extract of a letter just received from Mr. Ryley, one of Mr. Hall's most intelligent Leicester friends, in reference to his course of reading there.

* He always recommended those who were likely to be offended with the strangeness of Bentham's style, to study his principles through the medium of his elegant French commentator, M. Dumont.

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"It was what some men might think desultory; but it was essentially a constant habit of grappling with the strong. *Belles Lettres* he did not altogether neglect, though he held the average of such literature in small estimation. Poetry he seldom read, nor did he seem to me to have even studied it *con amore*. He thought Gray's Elegy the finest thing ever written. Milton was his favourite. There was something peculiar in his habits respecting poetry. He spoke slightly of poets, with few exceptions, and those few by no means what might have been expected from his own highly imaginative cast of mind. Yet, when he did get hold of an exquisite poem, he would read it with intense attention, apparently with the deepest interest, and then abuse it. With the exception of Milton, who is, in fact, an antique, he preferred the ancient to the modern poets. Of the poetry of our own day, he spoke with a contempt, which an accurate or extensive acquaintance with it, would have compelled him to relinquish. He had not, I think, made history a distinct and consecutive study, though he had read many of the original historians. He seemed to feel this of late years, and gave much of his time to the subject."

His enjoyment of the writings of the illustrious men of Greece and Rome, remained unimpaired to the last. Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, suggested to him many noble arguments in favour of an internal spring of morality, which he employed with his wonted skill in support of the religion of pure motive and devotedness of spirit. Virgil's Georgics he characterised as the most finished of human compositions; and he continued to prefer Virgil to Homer. He greatly admired the copiousness, grace, and harmony, of Cicero's diction; but considered Demosthenes by far the most powerful orator the world had known; and after speaking with fervid applause of the oration *περι Στεφανου*, added, that he thought it impossible for a man of soul and feeling to read a single page without catching fire. Only a few months before his last illness, in classifying the different natures, and respective effects, of the eloquence of reason, of passion, and of imagination, he selected his principal illustrations from Demosthenes, and endeavoured to shew that where the two former kinds of eloquence existed in due proportion, the third was of very minor consequence. The individual to whom he made these remarks was struck, as he proceeded, with the developement which they supplied of the causes of the deep impression made by his own pulpit addresses; and imputed his more sparing use of imagery in later

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years, rather to the deliberate conviction of his mind, than to any diminution of the imaginative faculty.

But I must restrain myself, and pass to Mr. Hall's every-day habits after his return to Bristol. The course of his life at home, when not interrupted by visitors, was very uniform. He generally rose and took his breakfast about nine o'clock. Breakfast was immediately succeeded by family worship. At this exercise he went regularly through the Scriptures, reading a portion of the Old Testament in the morning, and of the New Testament in the evening. On Sunday morning he almost invariably read the ninety-second Psalm, being short, and appropriate to the day. He also read in his family the translation of the four Gospels, by Campbell, whom he particularly admired, and often recommended, as an accurate translator, and a critic of great acuteness, taste, and judgement. He seldom made any remarks on the portion of Scripture, except when strangers were present, who, he knew, would be disappointed at their entire omission. He regarded himself as very incompetent to render this brief kind of exposition instructive. In the prayer that succeeded, he was not in the habit of forming his petitions on the passage of Scripture just read, though the prayer was usually of considerable length, and very minute in its appropriation. He adverted specifically to all the persons belonging to his family, present and absent; never forgot the people of his care; and dwelt on the distinct cases of members of the Church that were under any kind of trial or affliction.

After breakfast and worship, he retired into his study, and uniformly spent some time in devotion, afterwards generally reading a portion of the Hebrew Bible. For the two last years, he read daily two chapters of Matthew Henry's Commentary. As he proceeded he felt increasing interest and pleasure; admiring the copiousness, variety, and pious ingenuity of the thoughts; the simplicity, strength and pregnancy of the expressions. He earnestly recommended this commentary to his daughters; and on hearing the eldest reading, for successive mornings, to the second, he expressed the highest delight. The remainder of the morning until dinner, about three o'clock, was spent in reading some work of learning, or of severe thought. After dinner he generally retired to his study, and, if not in so much pain as to prevent it, slept for some time.

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On Tuesday evenings are held what are termed "the conferences," in the vestry of the Broadmead chapel: they are meetings ordinarily attended by about two hundred persons, at which two of the students belonging to the Bristol Education Society, or one of the students, and the president, speak on a passage of Scripture previously selected for the purpose. Mr. Hall always attended on these occasions, and concluded by speaking for about a quarter of an hour, on the subject of the preceding addresses. He also attended the prayer meetings, in the same place, on Thursday evenings; except once a month, namely, on the Thursday previous to the administration of the Lord's Supper, when he preached.

The other evenings in the week, except Saturday, (and that, indeed, not always excepted), he usually spent at the house of one or other of his congregation, with a very few friends, who were invited to meet him. His inability to walk having greatly increased, his friends generally sent a carriage for him about six o'clock, and conveyed him back about ten.

It is difficult to say whether he had greater fondness for retirement or for company. It displeased him if, especially by sudden interruptions, he was obliged to give up his morning hours of study to visitors; and it would commonly have been a disappointment, if he had not the opportunity of spending his evenings in society. If he were, at any time, thrown among persons of distinguished talents and attainments, and their general character pleased him, it was soon shewn how truth and knowledge might be educed by the operation of intellect upon intellect, and how rich a field of instruction and delight would thus be open for the general enjoyment of the party. Usually, however, his choice turned simply upon the prerequisite of piety; he sought for no other acquisitions in his associates than the graces of the Spirit; intelligence added to the enjoyment, but was not essential to it. The society of old friends had with him an exquisite charm, which was greatly heightened if their fathers had been known and esteemed by him or his father; such intercourse, requiring no effort, gave full scope to his affections, without disturbing his mental repose. He uniformly retired from these evening parties, full of grateful references to the pleasure which he had felt. If any of his family who accompanied him, happened to say that the evening had been dull, he would reply, "I don't think so. It was

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very pleasant. I enjoyed it. I enjoy every thing." Considering the continuity of his sufferings, how touching a commentary is this upon the inspired aphorism, "the good man shall be satisfied from himself!"

Mr. Hall commonly retired to rest a little before eleven o'clock; but, after his first sleep, which lasted about two hours, he quitted his bed to obtain an easier position on the floor, or upon three chairs; and would then employ himself in reading the book on which he had been engaged during the day. Sometimes, indeed, often, the laudanum, large as the doses had become, did not sufficiently neutralize his pain, to remove the necessity for again quitting his bed.* In these cases he would again put on the dress prepared to keep him adequately warm, and resume his reading. On Sunday mornings, as soon as he awoke, it was usual with him to say, "This is the Lord's day. This is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." And he often impressed it on his family, that they ought "not to think their own thoughts," or "to find their own pleasure," on that day.

He did not pursue any plan of training, or of discipline, with his children. He was remarkably affectionate and indulgent; but he did nothing systematically to correct defects, to guide or excite their minds. Now and then he recommended his daughters to read some particular book; one, perhaps, that he had himself read with peculiar satisfaction: but beyond this there do not appear to have been any direct, specific, endeavours to impart knowledge, or, in any uniform manner, to inculcate religious principles.

When, however, any of his children were about to quit home for a short time, it was his practice to summon them to his study, exhort them, and pray with them. One of his daughters on writing to a friend after his death, says, "Well I remember "that, when I was a child, on leaving home for a few days, or on "going to school, he would call me into the study, give me the "tenderest advice, make me to kneel down by him at the same "chair, and then, both bathed in tears, would he fervently sup- "plicate the divine protection for me. This, I believe, he did

* For more than twenty years he had not been able to pass a whole night in bed. When this is borne in mind, it is truly surprising that he wrote and published so much; nay, that he did not sink into dotage before he was fifty years of age.

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"with regard to all of us on leaving home, while young." Their minds were also often deeply impressed, by hearing him, as they passed his study door, commending them, by name, with the utmost fervency, to God, and entreating those blessings for each, which, in his judgement, each most needed.*

Periodical private fasts, such as those which he observed at Leicester, he continued to observe at Bristol, making them seasons of extraordinary self-examination, prayer, and renewed dedication to God. He was not in the habit of keeping a regular journal, nor, generally speaking, did he approve of it, from a persuasion that it tempted to an artificial tone of expression which did not accord with the actual state of the heart. But on some solemn occasions he made a short note, in one of his memorandum books, containing hints of texts, &c.

Thus: "New-years'-day, January 1st, 1826. I have begun the year with a sincere resolution, in the strength of divine grace, to devote myself wholly and entirely to God: but, knowing my extreme weakness and corruption, I dare place no dependence whatever on my own resolutions. I have, on many occasions, found them unstable as water. I can only cast myself on the mercy of my God, and cry, with the Psalmist, 'Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.' O Thou most holy and merciful Lord God, I beseech Thee to take up thine abode in my heart, and shape me entirely anew. Amen. Amen."

Again, on his birth-day, 1828. "This day I commence my 64th [65th] year. What reason have I to look with shame and humiliation on so long a tract of years spent to so little purpose. Alas! I am ashamed of my barrenness and unprofitableness. Assist me, O Lord, by Thy grace, that I may spend the short residue of my days in a more entire devotion to Thy service. It is my purpose, in the strength of divine grace, to take a more minute inspection into the state of my heart, and the tenour of my actions, and to make such observations and memorandums as circumstances may suggest. But, to Thee, O Lord, do I look for all spiritual strength, to keep Thy way, and do Thy will."

Mr. Hall still evinced a peculiar solicitude for the welfare of the poorer members of his flock, and greatly lamented his incapacity, from the loss of locomotive energy, to seek them out

* His habit of oral, audible, private prayer, rested upon the conviction, that silent prayer was apt to degenerate into meditation, while, from our compound nature, a man cannot but be affected by the sound of his own voice, when adequately expressing what is really felt.

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in their own habitations, and associate with them frequently, as he had done with the poor at Cambridge and Leicester. He publicly expressed his concern that some plan was not arranged for his meeting them in small parties at specified times, and assured them of the cordial readiness with which his part of such a plan should be executed. This, I believe, was not accomplished.

The indications of infirm age now rapidly exhibited themselves, but happily were unaccompanied by a decaying mind, or a querulous spirit. The language of his conduct, and of his heart, corresponded with that of the pious ancient, "Lord, give me patience now, and ease hereafter!" If tempests come they will not last long, but soon will be hushed into an eternal calm.

His inability to take exercise, on account of the gradual increase of his complaint, gave rise, about six years before his death, to another disorder, formidable in its nature, and fatal in its issue. The indications of a plethoric habit became more and more apparent. "Thus," adopting the language of Mr. Addington, "the system of the blood-vessels had a laborious duty to perform in circulating their fluid, which, for want of the full aid of muscular exertion, could not be equally distributed. The smaller ones on the surface of the body, and in the extremities, never appeared to derive a sufficient quantity of blood to furnish the usual proportion of animal heat, while the large trunks in the interior became overloaded. The natural consequence was, that the heart, on whose power the propulsion of the blood to the extremities depends, being over stimulated and oppressed by the condition of the large vessels, became weakened; and, occasionally failing in the regular and equable transmission of the blood, would produce a sensation of distress in the region of the chest." The malady, thus produced, becoming more and more severe, Mr. Hall, when in London in 1828, was persuaded by his friends to take the advice of an eminent physician: from which, however, no permanent good resulted. By the summer of 1830, the disorder had increased, so seriously, that his medical friends at Bristol recommended a suspension of his pastoral duties for a few weeks, that he might try the effect of a total change of air and scene.

He therefore spent some time at Coleford, in the forest of Dean, in the society of his old and valued friend, the Rev. Isaiah Birt. He also spent a few weeks at Cheltenham. At

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both these places he preached with his accustomed talent; and his general appearance, too clearly indicating that the close of his ministerial labours was at hand, gave a deeper impression to his instructions and exhortations. When absent from home he was in the habit of writing to his children. My narrow limits have prevented my giving extracts from any of those letters; but I am induced to insert part of one, written at this time to his son, who had been placed with a respectable chemist and druggist at Bristol, in the hope that it may be useful to other youths in similar circumstances.

"*15th October*, 1830.

"My Dear Robert,

"I have long designed to write to you, that I might communicate to you some hints of advice, which I could convey more easily, and, perhaps, more effectually, than by speaking.

"I need not tell you, my dear boy, how solicitous I am for your welfare in both worlds, and how often I have borne you on my heart in my secret addresses to that Father which is in heaven. But, alas! the prayers of parents for their children will avail nothing, if they are not induced to pray for themselves, 'for every one must give an account of *himself* to God.' I hope, my dear child, you do not live in the entire neglect of this most important duty: let me entreat you to attend to it constantly, and never to begin or end a day without it. Daily entreat the pardon of your sins, for the sake of the Redeemer, and earnestly implore the assistance of his grace, to enable you to resist temptation, and to live in such a manner as shall prepare you for a blessed immortality. Pray do not neglect, at the same time, to read a portion, longer or shorter, of the word of God. 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his ways, but by taking heed thereto according to thy word?'

"I hope, my dear Robert, you will continue in your present situation. On the supposition of your doing so (and I can do nothing better for you), let me entreat you to make it your constant care to conciliate the esteem of Mr. C——, which you will certainly do, if you cheerfully comply with his orders, and make his interest your own. Nothing injures the character of a young man more than restlessness and fickleness; nothing, on the contrary, secures his credit and comfort like a steady and persevering attention to the duties of his station. Every situation has its inconveniences and its difficulties; but time and perseverance will surmount the one, and make you almost insensible of the other. The consciousness of having overcome difficulties, and combatted trials successfully,

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will afford you, in the issue, a far higher satisfaction than you can ever hope to obtain by recoiling from them.

"Combat idleness in all its forms; nothing is so destructive as idle habits, nothing so useful as habits of industry.

* * * * *

"Never demean yourself by contending about trifles; yield in things of small moment to the inclinations and humours of your companions. In a word, my dear boy, make yourself amiable.

"Fear God, and love your fellow-creatures, and be assured you will find 'Wisdom's ways, ways of pleasantness, and her paths, paths of peace.'

"To say all in one word, 'If you are wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.'

"I am

"Your affectionate Father,

"ROBERT HALL."*

On Mr. Hall's return to Bristol towards the end of October, hopes were entertained that his health was improved, and his strength recruited; but they were only of short duration. The spasmodic affection of the chest occurred with increasing frequency, and in a more alarming character. In one instance, on the first of January, 1831, the attack was so severe as to threaten immediate dissolution. It passed off, however, as former attacks had done, on taking blood from the arm; and soon afterwards he returned to spend the remainder of the evening with the friends whom he had left when the paroxysm came on; and in his usual cheerful and happy spirit took his ordinary share, and evinced an undiminished interest, in the conversation.

The morning of that day had been signalized by the extraordinary pathos which he imparted to the religious services, at a prayer meeting, held, according to annual custom, in the vestry at Broadmead. The intensity of his devotional feelings, and the fervour of his supplications in behalf of the assembled congregation; as well as the glowing affection and deep solemnity with which he addressed them, as he reviewed the past dispensations of providence, and anticipated some of the probable events of the year now opening upon them, both in

* The youth to whom this letter was addressed went abroad soon after the decease of his father, and intelligence of his death has been received since these sheets were prepared for the press.

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relation to them and himself, excited the strongest emotion, and, in connexion with the events that immediately followed, made an indelible impression upon their minds: nearly all his subsequent addresses, whether on the Sunday or the week-day evening services, partook, more or less, of the same pathetic and solemnly anticipatory character. One of the most impressive of these, of which many of the congregation retain a vivid recollection, was delivered on the morning of Sunday, January 16th. The text from which he preached was, Deuteronomy xxxiii. 25: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

In this discourse he seemed to be preparing his people and himself, for that event by which they were to be deprived of their invaluable pastor, and he to be freed from anguish and sorrow: when, his soul liberated from its chain, and clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness, was to go forth, "first into liberty, then into glory."

A highly valued correspondent,* whose communications greatly enrich this volume, enables me to present the following summary of Mr. Hall's application or improvement; which, from its occasion, as well as its excellence, cannot but be read with lively interest.

"Improvement. 1. Take no thought, no anxious, distressing, harassing, thought, for the morrow; suffer not your minds to be torn asunder by doubt or apprehension. Consider, rather, what is the *present* will of God, and rest satisfied and content; without anticipating evils which may never arrive.

"Do not heighten your present sorrows by a morbid imagination. You know not what a day may bring forth. The future is likely to be *better* than you expect, as well as worse. The real victory of Christians arises from *attention to present duty*. This carries them from strength to strength.

"Some are alarmed at the thought of death; they say, How shall I meet the agonies of dissolution? But when you are called to die, you will, if among God's children, receive dying consolation. Be satisfied if you have the strength to live to God, and God will support you when you come to die. Some fear persecution, lest, at such a season, they should 'make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience:' 'As thy day is, such shall thy strength be.'

"2. Consider to what it is we owe our success. If we are nearer

* The Rev. Thomas Grinfield, A. M. of Clifton, near Bristol.

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our salvation than when we believed, let us not ascribe it to ourselves, to our own arm, but to the grace of God: 'Not I, but the grace of God with me,' enabling me to sustain, and to conquer. If we continue, it is 'because we have obtained help of God:' we are '*kept* by his mighty power unto salvation.' In all our sufferings, if christians, we are perpetually indebted to divine succour.

"3. Let us habitually look up to God, in the exercise of faith and prayer. Instead of yielding ourselves to dejection, let us plead the promises, and flee to the Divine Word. He has been accustomed to sustain the faithful: and He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' He is never weary: Look to Him: 'They that wait on him shall mount up with eagles' wings; run, and not be weary; walk, and not faint.' Go to Him in prayer,—cling to His strength,—lay hold on His arm. You have a powerful Redeemer: 'be strong in the power of His might!' Draw down the succours of His grace, which will enable you to go on, 'from strength to strength,' until you appear before God in Zion."

The last service at Broadmead in which Mr. Hall took any part, was the church meeting (when only the members of the church are assembled) on Wednesday the 9th of February. His closing prayer, on that occasion, is spoken of as most spiritual and elevated, exhibiting in its highest manifestation, the peculiar union of humility, benevolence, and fervour, by which his devotional exercises had very long been characterised.

On the next evening, Thursday, the usual monthly sermon preparatory to the administration of the Lord's Supper, was to have been delivered; but Mr. Hall's discharge of this duty was prevented, by a severe attack of the complaint in his chest, which came on just after he had retired to his study to prepare for that service. This was the commencement of the series of paroxysms which terminated in his dissolution.

"Early on the Sunday morning (I again quote one of the letters of my esteemed friend, Mr. Addington) being requested to see him, I found him in a condition of extreme suffering and distress. The pain in his back had been uncommonly severe during the whole night, and compelled him to multiply, at very short intervals, the doses of his anodyne, until he had taken no less than 125 grains of solid opium, equal to more than 3,000 drops, or nearly four ounces of laudanum!! This was the only instance in which I had ever seen him at all overcome by the soporific quality of the medicine; and it was, even then, hard to determine whether the effect was owing

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so much to the quantity administered, as to the unusual circumstance of its not having proved, even for a short time, an effectual antagonist to the pain it was expected to relieve.

"Inured as he was to the endurance of pain, and unaccustomed to any strong expression of complaint, he was forced to confess that his present agony was unparalleled by any thing in his former experience. The opium having failed to assuage his pain, he was compelled to remain in the horizontal posture; but whilst in this situation, a violent attack in his chest took place, which, in its turn, rendered an upright position of the body no less indispensable. The struggle that ensued, between these opposing and alike urgent demands, became most appalling, and it was difficult to imagine that he could survive it; especially, as from the extreme prostration of vital energy, the remedy by which the latter of those affections had often been mitigated, viz. bleeding, could not be resorted to. Powerful stimulants, such as brandy, opium, æther, and ammonia, were the only resources; and, in about an hour from my arrival, we had the satisfaction of finding him greatly relieved and expressing his lively gratitude to God.

"The whole of his demeanour throughout this agonizing crisis, as well as during the remainder of the day, a day of much suffering, exhibited, in a striking degree, the efficacy of christian faith and hope, in supporting and tranquillizing the mind of their possessor, in a season of extreme and torturing affliction. His language abounded with expressions at once of the deepest humility and of thankfulness to God for his 'unspeakable mercies,'—together with affectionate acknowledgements of the care and assiduities of his family and the friends around him."

From this time the paroxysms increased rapidly both in frequency and severity; and Mr. Hall, in the intervals between their occurrence, was usually so weak and exhausted, as seldom to be able to converse with those around him. His expressions, however, insulated and broken as they often were, proved that he was able fully to exercise that trust in God which is the grand principle of religion, and that thus trusting in him, his soul was kept in peace. No murmuring, no language of irritability, escaped from his lips.

It is not my intention to dwell upon the melancholy detail of the ten days previous to his death. I will only record a few such expressions as serve to shew that, acute as were his sufferings, God left him not without support.

Thus, when he first announced his apprehension that he

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should never again minister among his people, he immediately added, "But, I am in God's hands, and I rejoice that I am. I "am God's creature, at his disposal, for life or death; and that "is a great mercy."

Again, "I have not one anxious thought, either for life or "death. What I dread most are dark days. But I have had "none yet: and I hope I shall not have any."

Again, "I fear pain more than death. If I could die easily, "I think I would rather go than stay; for I have seen enough "of the world, and I have a humble hope."

On another occasion, a friend having said to him, 'This God will be our God;' he replied, "Yes, he will,—he will be our guide even unto death."

On recovering from one of his severe paroxysms, he adverted to the affectionate attentions of his beloved wife and daughters, as well as his numerous comforts, and exclaimed—"What a "mercy it is to have so many alleviations! I might have "been deprived of all these comforts;—I might have been "in poverty;—I might have been the most abject wretch on "the face of the earth."

During one night, in which the attacks were a little mitigated in number and severity, he frequently expressed the most lively gratitude to God, as well as his simple, unshaken reliance on his Saviour; and repeated nearly the whole of Robinson's beautiful hymn.

"Come, thou Fount of every blessing!
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of endless praise!" &c.

The same night, under one of the paroxysms, he said to the friend who was with him, "Why should a living man complain? "a man for the punishment of his sins? I have not complained, "have I, sir?—and I won't complain."

When Dr. Prichard was invited to join Mr. Chandler and Mr. Addington in consultation, on his arrival Mr. Hall arose and received him so much in his wonted cordial, courteous, manner, as, at the first moment, almost to check the apprehension of danger. On the evening of the same day he expatiated on the mercy of God in bringing him to close his life at Bristol.

His prevailing kindness was evinced throughout, in his solicitude for the comfort of those who sat up with him at night, or

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who remained in the house, to be called to his assistance, if necessary. He also exhorted the members of his family, and others occasionally present, to make religion the chief, the incessant, concern; urging especially upon some of the young among his friends, the duty of openly professing their attachment to Christ and his cause.

When he was a little recovered from one of his severe paroxysms, "I asked him (says Mr. Chandler) whether he felt much pain. He replied that his sufferings were great: 'but what (he added) are my sufferings to the sufferings of Christ? his sufferings were infinitely greater: his sufferings were complicated: God has been very merciful to me—very merciful: I am a poor creature—an unworthy creature; but God has been very kind—very merciful.' He then alluded to the character of the sufferings of crucifixion, remarking how intense and insufferable they must have been, and asked many minute questions on what I might suppose was the process by which crucifixion brought about death. He particularly inquired respecting the effect of pain—the nervous irritation—the thirst—the oppression of breathing—the disturbance of the circulation—and the hurried action of the heart, till the conversation gradually brought him to a consideration of his own distress; when he again reverted to the lightness of his sufferings when contrasted with those of Christ. He spoke of our Lord's 'enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself'—of the ingratitude and unkindness he received from those for whom he went about doing good—of the combination of the mental and corporeal agonies sustained on the cross—the length of time during which our Lord hung—the exhaustion occasioned, &c. He then remarked how differently he had been situated; that though he had endured as much or more than fell to the lot of most men, yet all had been in mercy. I here remarked to him, that with most persons the days of ease and comfort were far more numerous than those of pain and sorrow. He replied, 'But I have been a great sufferer in my time: it is, however, generally true: the dispensations of God have been merciful to me.' He then observed, that a contemplation of the sufferings of Christ was the best antidote against impatience under any troubles we might experience; and recommended me to reflect much on this subject when in pain or distress, or in expectation of death.*

"During the whole of this severe illness, he read much in Campbell's translation of the Gospels; and, at intervals, one of his daughters read to him, from this version, his favourite to the last.

* Chandler's Authentic Account, p. 28.

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On the morning of the 21st, the day on which he died, he had it laid before him, as usual, and read it himself in his ordinary recumbent attitude.

Mrs. Hall, in the course of this morning, remarking to him that he appeared better, and expressing her hopes that he would recover; he replied, "Ah! my dear, let us *hope* for the best, and *prepare* for the worst." He then stated his opinion that this day would be critical. When his medical attendants met in consultation, a little after noon, he seemed rather better; and Mr. Chandler left him, between one and two, reclining on the sofa, leaning on his elbow with as much muscular energy as ever.

"Before leaving him (he remarks) I explained to him the plan of proceeding to be observed; on which he bowed, saying, that whatever we wished he would comply with, he would do whatever we desired; begging that he might not interfere with my duties to other patients, and adding that he thought he should be very comfortable till my return.

"In a very short time, and before I had reached home, I was summoned to behold the last agonizing scene of this great and extraordinary man. His difficulty of breathing had suddenly increased to a dreadful and final paroxysm. It seems, this last paroxysm came on more gradually than was usual with those which preceded. Mr. Hall finding his breathing becoming much worse, first rose more on his elbow, then raised his body, supporting himself with his hand, till the increasing agitation obliged him to rise completely on the sofa, and to place his feet in hot water—the usual means he resorted to for relief in every paroxysm. Mrs. Hall, observing a fixation of his eyes, and an unusual expression on his countenance, and indeed in his whole manner, became alarmed by the sudden impression that he was dying; and exclaimed in great agitation, 'This can't be dying!' when he replied, 'It is death—it is death—death! Oh the sufferings of this body!' Mrs. Hall then asking him, 'But are you comfortable in your mind?' he immediately answered, 'Very comfortable—very comfortable:' and exclaimed, 'Come, Lord Jesus—Come.'——He then hesitated, as if incapable of bringing out the last word; and one of his daughters, involuntarily as it were, anticipated him by saying, 'Quickly!' on which her departing father gave her a look expressive of the most complacent delight.

"On entering his room, I found him sitting on the sofa, surrounded by his lamenting family; with one foot in the hot water,

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and the other spasmodically grasping the edge of the bath; his frame waving in violent, almost convulsive heavings, sufficiently indicative of the process of dissolution. I hastened, though despairingly, to administer such stimulants as might possibly avert the threatening termination of life; and as I sat by his side for this purpose he threw his arm over my shoulders for support, with a look of evident satisfaction that I was near him. He said to me, 'I am dying: death is come at last: all will now be useless.' As I pressed upon him draughts of stimulants, he intimated that he would take them if I wished; but he believed all was useless. On my asking him if he suffered much, he replied, 'Dreadfully.' The rapidly increasing gasping soon overpowered his ability to swallow, or to speak, except in monosyllables, few in number, which I could not collect; but, whatever might be the degree of his suffering, (and great it must have been,) there was no failure of his mental vigour or composure. Indeed, so perfect was his consciousness, that in the midst of these last agonies, he intimated to me very shortly before the close, with his accustomed courteousness, a fear lest he should fatigue me by his pressure; and when his family, one after another, gave way in despair, he followed them with sympathizing looks, as they were obliged to be conveyed from the room. This was his last voluntary movement; for immediately, a general convulsion seized him, and he quickly expired."*

O! how inconceivably blessed is the change, when, at the moment of utmost agony, the soul enters the regions of endless joy; passes from the land of the dying, to the land of the living; from the society of saints, to the blissful presence of the King of Saints, where knowledge, illumination, purity, and love, flow for ever and ever from the Inexhaustible Fountain! Such is the ineffable reward which awaits all the faithful followers of the Lamb. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast "given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my "glory."

Nothing, I feel, would be more presumptuous than for me to attempt to portray fully the literary, intellectual, or religious, character of my inestimable friend.† I have known, and still

* See Note D. Appendix.

† For some interesting sketches which, together, will assist in correctly estimating Mr. Hall's character, see Note E. Appendix.

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know, many whom I greatly value, many whom I cordially love and admire, many from whom I have learnt much and might have learnt more, but for my incapacity to receive what they were ready to impart; but I have known none in whom so many elements of mental and moral greatness were so happily combined as in Mr. Hall; none whose converse and whose diversified knowledge have so constantly interested, charmed, and instructed me; none whose transcendent qualities excited so high and overawing a veneration, yet none, whose humility and cordiality, exquisitely blending with genius and piety, inspired so unhesitating a confidence.

His profound acquaintance with the mind and heart, and his corresponding faculty of tracing and separating the springs of human action, gave him an unusual influence with the present race as a sacred orator: while he seems to be one of the few men whose creative intellect, and whose singular ability in the developement of religious truth, and the illustration and confirmation of many principles of universal and increasing interest, qualify them to operate with as extensive an influence in moulding the intellectual and moral character of succeeding generations.

His varied and extraordinary powers, thus diffusively applied to the most momentous subjects, will be seen from his "Works," which are now collected that they may constitute his noblest monument, the most enduring tribute to his memory.

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APPENDIX.

NOTE A.—[See page 51.]

MISCELLANEOUS GLEANINGS FROM MR. HALL'S CONVERSATIONAL REMARKS.

I AM perfectly well aware that no memoranda can convey an adequate idea of the vivacity, originality, and brilliancy, of Mr. Hall's conversational powers. It was usually easy to remember the sentiments which he expressed, and sometimes the images, whether sportive or tasteful, by which he illustrated them; but the beautiful language in which his remarks in conversation were clothed, could seldom be recalled, except when he fully communicated his meaning in a very short, but happily turned phrase.

This note, therefore, while it may serve to record some of his sentiments and opinions on interesting topics, must be understood as giving a very faint notion of his manner of expressing himself, except in those cases where the language, at once brief, clear, and characteristic, fixed itself indelibly upon the memory.

The connected series, first presented, has been kindly transmitted by the Rev. Robert Balmer, of Berwick-upon-Tweed, and is selected from his recollections of the substance of three or four conversations which he had with Mr. Hall in the years 1819 and 1823.

In the course of some remarks on various theological writers of our own times, he said, "Dr. Smith is the best Biblical critic with whom I am personally acquainted; and I should think him one of the most learned theologians now alive." On my asking, If he did not consider Archbishop Magee superior in ability, and equal in learning, to Dr. Smith? he replied, with his usual decision, "Not nearly equal in learning, Sir; I do not suppose that Archbishop Magee knows any thing about the German critics, with whom Dr. Smith is intimately acquainted, and from whom, notwithstanding all their absurdity and impiety, much may unquestionably be learned. There is one thing," he added, "in Dr. Smith's work, much to be lamented; and that is, the tone of excessive lenity maintained towards his opponents. In consequence of this, his reasonings will not produce an effect proportioned to their intrinsic force; and his readers are tempted to regard the opinions which he refutes with far less horror than they deserve. The proper tone in theological controversy is, I imagine, somewhere between Bishop Horsley's intolerable arrogance and asperity, and Dr. Smith's unwarrantable softness and urbanity."

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On informing him, that I had been perplexed with doubts as to the extent of the death of Christ, and expressing a wish to know his opinion, he replied, "There, Sir, my sentiments give me the advantage of you; "for on that point I entertain no doubts whatever: I believe firmly in "'general redemption;' I often preach it, and I consider the fact that "'Christ died for all men' as the only basis that can support the universal "offer of the Gospel."—'But you admit the doctrine of election, which necessarily implies limitation. Do you not think that election and particular redemption are inseparably connected?'—"I believe firmly," he rejoined, "in election, but I do not think it involves particular redemption; "I consider the sacrifice of Christ as a remedy, not only adapted, but intended "for all, and as placing all in a salvable state; as removing all barriers to "their salvation, except such as arise from their own perversity and depravity. "But God foresaw or knew that none would accept the remedy, merely of "themselves, and therefore, by what may be regarded as a separate arrange-"ment, he resolved to glorify his mercy, by effectually applying salvation to "a certain number of our race, through the agency of his Holy Spirit. I "apprehend, then, that the limiting clause implied in election, refers not to "the purchase but to the application of redemption." This representation seemed to me, at the time, to be encumbered with considerable difficulties; and I was not sure that I correctly apprehended it. Not choosing, however, to request Mr. H. to repeat or elucidate his statements, I asked him if he could refer me to any book where I should find what he regarded as the scripture doctrine on the subject, stated and illustrated. He referred me to a book to which Dr. Smith, of Homerton, had, not many days before, referred me, in answer to a similar question: "Bellamy's True Religion Delineated."

In the course of our conversation respecting the extent of Christ's death, Mr. Hall expatiated at considerable length on the number and variety of the Scripture expressions, in which it seems to be either explicitly asserted or necessarily implied, that it was intended not for the elect exclusively, but for mankind generally, such as "the world," "all," "all men," "every man," &c. He made some striking remarks on the danger of twisting such expressions from their natural and obvious import, and on the absurdity of the interpretations put on them by some of the advocates of particular redemption. He mentioned, especially, the absurdity of explaining "the world," John iii. 16, to signify the elect world, as the text would then teach that some of the elect may not believe. He noticed farther, that the doctrine of general redemption was not only asserted expressly in many texts, but presupposed in others, such as "Destroy not with thy meat," &c. and "Denying the Lord that bought them;" and that it was incorporated with other parts of the Christian system, particularly with the universal offers and invitation of the Gospel.

On the question of church government, Mr. H.'s sentiments seemed to me undecided and somewhat inconsistent; and by many they would have been regarded as latitudinarian. He expressed his doubts whether any one form or model was delineated in the New Testament, as obligatory in all ages and in all circumstances; and said, that he was much disposed to adopt the maxim, "Whatever is best administered is best." In another conversation, when mention was made of a church, which, along with its minister, had been guilty

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of a scandalous irregularity in a matter of discipline, I stated what would be done in such circumstances among Presbyterians, and put the question, Will the neighbouring churches and ministers not interfere? Mr. H. intimated that they ought to remonstrate and advise; but that any claim to jurisdiction would, in his apprehension, be altogether unwarrantable; adding that the independence of churches appeared to him a principle expressly sanctioned by the word of God.

With regard to the question of "Terms of Communion," we had repeated conversations. On this subject he spoke with uncommon interest and animation; and seemed surprised at the arguments of those who were opposed to his views. I recollect, in particular, the effect produced on him, when I stated that I had heard Dr. Lawson, of Selkirk, declare, that he would not admit a Roman Catholic, not even Fenelon or Pascal, to the table of the Lord: Mr. H., who had been previously reclining on three chairs, instantly raised himself on his elbow, and spoke without intermission and with great rapidity for nearly a quarter of an hour; expatiating on the amazing absurdity and presumption of rejecting those whom Christ receives, and of refusing to hold communion on earth with those with whom we hope to associate in heaven. During all this time his manner was exceedingly vehement, his other arm was in continual motion, and his eyes, naturally most piercing, were lighted up with unusual brilliancy.

It was interesting and amusing to observe how Mr. Hall's exquisite sensibility to literary beauty, intermingled with, and qualified the operation of his principles and leanings, both as a Christian and Dissenter. Of this, I recollect various instances; but shall give only one. While conversing respecting Archbishop Magee, his talents, sentiments, conduct, &c., I quoted, as a proof of his high church principles, a remark from a charge then newly published: it was to this effect: That the Roman Catholics have a church without a religion; the Dissenters have a religion without a church; but the Establishment has both a church and a religion. Mr. Hall had not heard the remark before, and was exceedingly struck with it. "That, Sir," he exclaimed, smiling, "is a beautiful saying. I have not heard so fine an "observation for a long time. It is admirable, Sir." You admire it, I presume, for its point, not for its truth. *H.* "I admire it, Sir, for its plausibility "and cleverness. It is false, and yet it seems to contain a mass of truth. "It is an excellent stone for a churchman to pelt with."

After speaking of Antinomians, of whom it appeared there were then several in the neighbourhood of Leicester: "Pray, Sir," said he, "have you "got any Antinomians in Scotland?" None, I replied, who avow themselves such. There are individuals in our congregations who have what I consider a morbid aversion to practical preaching, and to a minute enforcement of duty; but almost all our people who know and care any thing about religion, will tell you that, although the believer is delivered from the law as a covenant of works, he is subject to it as a rule of life. "That," said Mr. H. "is pre-"cisely what I expected. Your ministers and your people have too much "information to be ensnared by such impieties. Antinomianism is a monster "which can live only in darkness; bring light on it and it expires."

The following opinions were expressed by Mr. H. respecting various writers in theology. I give them in the form of dialogue, inserting, of

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course, such questions and remarks of my own as led to his observations. Let it be remembered at the same time, that they are only fragments, as, in many instances, I do not now recollect more than a third or fourth part of what was said.

B. May I ask, Sir, what writers you would most recommend to a young minister. *H.* "Why, Sir, I feel very incompetent to give directions on that "head; I can only say that I have learned far more from John Howe, than "from any other author I ever read. There is an astonishing magnificence "in his conceptions. He had not the same perception of the beautiful, as of "the sublime; and hence his endless subdivisions." *B.* That was the fault of his age. *H.* "In part, Sir; but he has more of it than many of the "writers of that period, than Barrow, for example, who was somewhat "earlier. There was, I think, an innate inaptitude in Howe's mind for "discerning minute graces and proprieties, and hence his sentences are "often long and cumbersome. Still he was unquestionably the greatest of "the puritan divines."

After adverting to several of Howe's works, Mr. H. said, in reference to his 'Blessedness of the Righteous:' "Perhaps, Baxter's 'Saint's Rest' is "fitted to make a deeper impression on the majority of readers. Baxter en- "forces a particular idea with extraordinary clearness, force, and earnestness. "His appeals to the conscience are irresistible. Howe, again, is distinguished "by calmness, self-possession, majesty and comprehensiveness; and for my "own part, I decidedly prefer him to Baxter. I admire, exceedingly, his "'Living Temple,' his sermon on the 'Redeemer's Tears,' &c.; but, in my "opinion, the best thing he ever wrote, is his defence of the sincerity of the "Gospel offer. I refer to the treatise, called, the 'Reconcilableness of God's "Prescience of the Sins of Men, with his Counsels, Exhortations, and what- "ever others Means he used to prevent them.' This I regard as the most "profound, the most philosophical, and the most valuable of all Howe's "writings."

B. 'Do you think highly of Dr. Owen?' *H.* "No, Sir, by no means. "Have *you* read much of Owen, Sir; do you admire him?" *B.* 'I have read his Preliminary Exercitations to his great work on the Hebrews; his exposition of particular verses here and there; his book on church govern- ment; and some of his smaller treatises. I do not greatly admire him, nor have I learned much from him.' *H.* "You astonish me, Sir, by your "patience. You have accomplished a Herculean undertaking in reading "Owen's Preliminary Exercitations. To me he is intolerably heavy and "prolix." *B.* 'I do think, Sir, there are many valuable ideas in his writings; but, as a reasoner, he seems to me singularly illogical; for he often takes for granted the thing to be proved.' *H.* "I quite concur with the "latter part of your statement. As a reasoner, Dr. Owen is most illogical, "for he almost always takes for granted what he ought to prove; while he "is always proving what he ought to take for granted; and, after a long "digression, he concludes very properly with, 'This is not our concernment,' "and returns to enter on something still farther from the point."

I remarked that Jonathan Edwards's theory was opposed to our conscious- ness and our indestructible feelings; for, whenever we blamed ourselves for having acted wrong, we had an irresistible belief, not only that we could

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have acted otherwise, if we had chosen, but that we could have willed otherwise. To all this, Mr. H. readily assented, adding some remarks respecting two of Edwards's distinctions: the distinction between liberty to will, and liberty to act according to our will; and that between natural and moral necessity. Respecting the one of these, (I do not precisely remember which,) Mr. H. made the following ludicrous but characteristic observations.

"That distinction, Sir, lies at the basis of Edwards's theory; but it is not "original. It is to be found in the works of Dr. Owen: I think it certain "that Edwards found it there, buried, like the rest of Owen's ideas, amid a "heap of rubbish; and, finding it there, he did what Owen had not strength "of arm to do, took a firm grasp of it, and dragged it into light. It proved "a monster, and ought to have been smothered; but Edwards found it would "be useful to frighten the enemies of divine sovereignty and free grace, "and, therefore, instead of smothering it, he nursed it."

Mr. Hall made some inquiry respecting Dr. Henry, the historian, once a minister in Berwick, and afterwards colleague of Dr. Macknight, the commentator, in one of the churches in Edinburgh: I informed him, that from all I had ever heard, I believed Dr. Henry must have been a very dry and uninteresting preacher. This led to a reference to the well-known anecdote relative to these two individuals; according to which, the one when coming to church on a Sabbath morning, having got his clothes wet by a heavy rain, asked his colleague to officiate for him. "Go into the pulpit," said the other, "and you will be dry enough." Some doubt being expressed which of the two it was, to whom this remark was made, Mr. H. observed; "I "suppose, Sir, it was applicable to both." Immediately checking himself, he added, "And yet, I should think, that to an intellectual audience, an "audience that had any relish for Scripture exposition, Macknight must have "been interesting, if the discourses which he preached resembled his pub-"lished writings." 'Pray, Sir,' I said, 'do you admire Macknight as a commentator?' "Yes, Sir," he replied, "I do, very much; I think it would "be exceedingly difficult, indeed, to come after him in expounding the "apostolic epistles. I admit, at the same time, that he has grievous de-"ficiencies: there is a lamentable want of spirituality and elevation about "him. He never sets his foot in the other world if he can get a hole to step "into in this; and he never gives a passage a meaning which would render "it applicable and useful in all ages, if he can find in it any local or tem-"porary allusion. He makes fearful havoc, Sir, of the text on which you "preached to-day. His exposition of it is inimitably absurd." The text referred to was Ephesians i. 8. "Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence;" and the "wisdom and prudence" are explained by Macknight, not of the wisdom of God, as displayed in the scheme of redemption, but of the wisdom and prudence granted to the apostles to enable them to discharge their office.

Mr. Hall repeatedly referred to Dr. ——, and always in high admiration of his general character. The following are some remarks, respecting that extraordinary individual. "Pray, Sir, did you ever know any man who "had that singular faculty of repetition possessed by Dr. ——? Why, "Sir, he often reiterates the same thing ten or twelve times, in the course "of a few pages. Even Burke himself had not so much of that peculiarity.

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" His mind resembles that optical instrument lately invented; what do you " call it?" *B.* ' You mean, I presume, the kaleidoscope.' *H.* " Yes, Sir, " it is just as if thrown into a kaleidoscope. Every turn presents the object " in a new and a beautiful form; but the object presented is still the same. " Have you not been struck, Sir, with the degree in which Dr. —— pos- " sesses this faculty?" ' Do you not think, Sir,' I replied, ' that he has either far too much of this faculty, or that he indulges it to a faulty excess?' *H.* " Yes, Sir, certainly; his mind seems to move on hinges, not on wheels. " There is incessant motion, but no progress. When he was at Leicester, " he preached a most admirable sermon, on the necessity of immediate " repentance; but there were only two ideas in it, and on these his mind " revolved as on a pivot."

On metaphysics and moral philosophy, we talked at great length; but I cannot now give a tolerable specimen of his acute and eloquent remarks. One of his observations, however, I do remember, which struck me at the time, as exceedingly just and happy. Much had been said respecting the utility or inutility of metaphysical studies, and respecting the fact that they as yet had led to no useful discoveries. I made some such remark as this, that admitting such studies did not terminate in profitable discoveries, still they were advantageous as a field for cultivating and invigorating the mental powers. Mr. H. said, " An *arena*, not a *field*. Metaphysics yield no fruit. " They are not a field, they are only an arena, to which a man who has got " nothing to do, may go down sometimes, and try his skill in intellectual " gladiatorship. This, at present, is their chief recommendation."

Of the literary characters respecting whom we conversed, there was none whom he praised so highly as his friend Sir James Mackintosh, and the following fragments will convey some idea of Mr. Hall's estimate of that distinguished and lamented person. " I know no man," he said repeatedly and emphatically, " equal to Sir James in talents. The powers of his mind " are admirably balanced. He is defective only in imagination." At this last statement, I expressed my surprise, remarking that I never could have suspected that the author of the eloquent oration for Peltier was deficient in fancy. " Well, Sir," said Mr. H. " I don't wonder at your remark. The " truth is, he has imagination, too; but, with him, imagination is an acquisi- " tion rather than a faculty. He has, however, plenty of embellishment at " command; for his memory retains every thing. His mind is a spacious " repository, hung round with beautiful images, and when he wants one he " has nothing to do but reach up his hand to a peg, and take it down. But " his images were not manufactured in his mind; they were imported." *B.* ' If he be so defective in imagination, he must be incompetent to describe scenes and delineate characters vividly and graphically; and I should apprehend, therefore, he will not succeed in writing history.' *H.* " Sir, I do not " expect him to produce an eloquent or interesting history. He has, I fear, " mistaken his province. His genius is best adapted for metaphysical specu- " lation; but, had he chosen moral philosophy, he would probably have sur- " passed every living writer." *B.* ' I admired exceedingly some of his philosophical papers in the Edinburgh Review, his articles, for instance, on Madame de Staël's Germany, and on Dugald Stewart's Preliminary Dissertation; but there seemed to me a heaviness about them, and I do think that

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Mr. Jeffrey could expound a metaphysical theory with more vivacity and effect.' *H.* "With more vivacity, perhaps, but not with equal judgement or "acuteness. He would not go so deep, Sir; I am persuaded that if Sir "James Mackintosh had enjoyed leisure, and had exerted himself, he would "have completely outdone Jeffrey and Stewart, and all the metaphysical "writers of our times."

Of Dugald Stewart Mr. H. spoke slightingly; and it seemed to me that he was somewhat prejudiced against that amiable and accomplished philosopher, in consequence of unfavourable reports which had reached him respecting Mr. Stewart's religious sentiments. "He is," said Mr. H. "a "pleasing, but a feeble writer. I would never compare him with any of our "great metaphysicians; with Malebranche, or Locke, or Berkeley, or even "with Tucker. Reid had a more vigorous and original mind than Stewart; "and Campbell, I suspect, was superior to both. If Campbell had devoted "his attention to mental philosophy, he could have done all that Reid or "Stewart has accomplished; but neither of them could have written the "'Preliminary Dissertations' to his work on the Gospels. There is also too "much egotism and parade about Dugald Stewart. He is always polishing "away at the corner of a subject; but he could not rear a system of his own."

This comparison Mr. Hall followed out at considerable length, and in language exceedingly beautiful and magnificent; which, however, I cannot now recall. With regard to Stewart's style, Mr. H. observed, "That it was "unquestionably one of the finest philosophical styles that ever was written; "that Mr. S. had carried embellishment farther into the region of metaphysics "than any author that had preceded him; and that his embellishment was "invariably consistent with perfect sobriety of taste."

Of Dr. Thomas Brown, Mr. Hall observed, "That he was a man of more "genius, but less judgement, than his predecessor; that his style, with all its "beauties, was far inferior to Stewart's, as a vehicle for philosophical specu-"lation; that it was deficient in clearness and precision; and so exceedingly "diffuse, that all that was valuable in the four volumes of his lectures might "be condensed into one." I remarked that Dr. Brown was often the victim of his own ingenuity; that, in point of candour, he was immeasurably inferior to Stewart; that the former would never agree with any writer, if he could possibly differ from him, and that the latter would never differ from any one, if he could possibly agree with him. Mr. Hall acquiesced in substance in these remarks, and proceeded to comment on Dr. B.'s amazing boldness and originality. He characterised briefly several of his lectures, stating that those which had most deeply interested him, and which he thought among the best, were the "Lectures on the Immateriality and the Immutability of the Soul."

Mr. H. mentioned that he had read a considerable portion of Kant's works. On my remarking that I knew nothing of that philosopher, except from Dr. Thomas Brown's article upon him, in an early number of the Edinburgh Review, and from Madame de Staël's book on Germany; that I should suppose his writings to be utterly unintelligible and uninteresting; Mr. H. replied, "It is certainly no great loss to be ignorant of Kant's works. His phi-"losophy is a system of scepticism." In answer to his question, "whether "I had read much of Madame de Staël's works," I informed him that I had

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read her "Remarks on Rousseau," one of her novels, and her book on Germany. *H.* "Did you read her book on Germany from beginning to end?" *B.* 'I did.' *H.* "I admire your patience more and more, Sir." He added that he had looked into Madame de Staël's Germany; that on finding some philosopher, a well-known idealist, (I cannot at this moment recollect who it was,) spoken of as an opponent of the ideal theory, he had thrown aside the book in disgust; supposing that very little could be learned from a writer so ill informed as to be capable of such a blunder. He seemed very reluctant to allow that many of her remarks were acute and ingenious; and when something was said about the flights of her fancy, he said, "that, "for his part, he could not admire her flights, for to him she was generally "invisible; not because she ascended to a great height above the earth, "but because she invariably selected a foggy atmosphere."

To the preceding Selections from Mr. Balmer's communication, may be added a few of Mr. Hall's Remarks, rapidly thrown off on various occasions, taken from the letters of different friends.

On the return of the Bourbons to France, in 1814, a gentleman called upon Mr. Hall, in the expectation that he would express himself in terms of the utmost delight on account of that signal event. Mr. Hall said, "I am sorry "for it, Sir. The cause of knowledge, science, freedom, and pure religion, "on the Continent, will be thrown back half a century; the intrigues of the "Jesuits will be revived; and popery will be resumed in France with all its "mummery, but with no power, except the power of persecution." This opinion was expressed about six weeks before the issuing of the Pope's bull for the revival of the order of Jesuits in Europe, 7th August, 1814.

A few years afterwards, Mr. Hall, on an allusion being made to the battle of Waterloo, remarked, "I have scarcely thought of the unfulfilled prophe- "cies, since that event. It overturned all the interpretations which had been "previously advanced by those who had been thought sound theologians, "and gave new energy to the Pope and the Jesuits, both of whom seemed "rapidly coming to nothing, as the predictions seemed to teach. That battle, "and its results, seemed to me to put back the clock of the world six degrees."

Notwithstanding his decided sentiments as a whig and a reformer, he manifested through life a reverence for ancient institutions, rank, and illustrious descent. He was present in Westminster Abbey at Handel's Commemoration, and saw the King (George III.) stand up in one part of the performance of the Messiah, shedding tears. Nothing, he said, had ever affected him more strongly. "It seemed like a great act of national assent to the fundamental "truths of religion." He was most accurately acquainted with the descents and dependencies of our principal noble families.

More than once have I heard him, with affectionate respect, mention Dr. Ryder, the present Bishop of Lichfield, whom he had known as a pious and useful parish clergyman in the neighbourhood of Leicester. "He has not "been injured," said Mr. H., "by promotion; he is the same man as a bishop, "that he was as the laborious parish priest; to such a bishop, we may apply "the apocalyptic title, 'an angel of the church.' We may say of him what "St. John says of Demetrius, that he 'has good report of all men, and of the "truth itself.'"

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Speaking of Mrs. H. More's writings, (about twenty years ago,) he eulogised them very highly. He thought that she and Mr. Wilberforce had done more for the cause of christianity, by writing, than any other persons living. Somebody mentioned a review of one of her books in the ———, written by Miss ——. "Miss ——, Sir," said Mr. Hall, "Miss —— think of reviewing "Mrs. More! Sir, it is like throwing soft peas against a rock."

On being asked if he had read the Life of Bishop Watson, then (in 1818) recently published, he replied that he had, and regretted it, as it had lowered his estimate of the bishop's character. Being asked, why? he expressed his reluctance to enlarge upon the subject; but added, "Poor man, I pity him! "He married public virtue in his early days, but seemed for ever afterwards "to be quarrelling with his wife."

He did not like Dr. Gill as an author. When Mr. Christmas Evans was in Bristol, he was talking to Mr. Hall about the Welch language, which he said was very copious and expressive. 'How I wish, Mr. Hall, that Dr. Gill's works had been written in Welch.'—"I wish they had, Sir; I wish they had, "with all my heart, for then I should never have read them. They are a "continent of mud, Sir."

John Wesley having been mentioned, he said, "The most extraordinary thing about him was, that while he set all in motion, he was himself perfectly calm and phlegmatic: he was the quiescence of turbulence."

He spoke of Whitfield as presenting a contrast in the mediocrity of his writings to the wonderful power of his preaching: of the latter there could be no doubt, however; but it was of a kind not to be represented in writing; "it is impossible to paint eloquence."

Speaking of Mr. ——'s composition: "Yes, it is very eloquent, but equally "cold; it is the beauty of frost."

"Poor Mr. —— [a nervously modest man,] seems to beg pardon of all "flesh for being in this world."

Some one observing to Mr. Hall that his animation increased with his years— "Indeed: then I am like touch-wood; the more decayed, the "easier fired."

Lord Byron was mentioned.—"I tried to read Childe Harold, but could "not get on, and gave it up."—'Have you read the fourth canto, Sir, which is by far the best?'—"Oh no, Sir, I shall never think of trying."—'But, Sir, independently of the mere poetry, it must be interesting to contemplate such a remarkable mind as Lord Byron's.'—"It is well enough, Sir, to have "a general acquaintance with such a character; but I know not why we "should take pleasure in minutely investigating deformity."

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NOTE B.—[See page 65.]

Quotations from the Writings of Sir James Mackintosh and Dr. Parr, relative to Mr. Hall.

1. *Extracts from a Review of Mr. Hall's Sermon on Modern Infidelity, written by Sir James Mackintosh. Published in the Monthly Review for February*, 1800.

As far as philosophy and eloquence can make a publication important, and as far as very peculiar circumstances can render it interesting, certainly no sermon of our times merits a more elaborate criticism than that of Mr. Hall.

A new sect of infidels has arisen in this age, who, with a boldness unknown to their predecessors, not only reject religion as *false*, but condemn it as *pernicious*. The great majority of former unbelievers were so far from denying its *usefulness*, that they represented it as an invention of statesmen for the very purpose of giving aid to morality, and efficacy to the laws; but some of our modern infidels declare open war against every principle and form of religion, natural as well as revealed, as hostile to morality, and therefore destructive of the happiness of the human race. This extravagant and detestable paradox, which long lay neglected in the forgotten volumes of Cardan and Spinoza, is now revived and disseminated by men who possess the dangerous art of making paradoxes popular. Notwithstanding its evident and monstrous absurdity, it has gained many proselytes on the continent of Europe; and a few, we fear, even in this fortunate island; which, as it was the first country that was seized with the disease of infidelity, was the first also which was completely cured of that pestilential malady. Against this new sect a most vigorous and formidable attack is made in the sermon before us, by Mr. Hall, the pastor of a dissenting congregation at Cambridge; who, in his preface, most earnestly deprecates all contentions between different sects of Christians, in the presence of the common enemy; and who speaks of his being a dissenter only as a motive for generous emulation, and for vying with the church in zeal and vigour in defence of our common Christianity, in imitation of the ablest and most virtuous dissenters of former times.

"When at the distance of more than half a century, Christianity was "assaulted by a *Woolston*, a *Tindal*, and a *Morgan*, it was ably supported, "both by clergymen of the established church, and writers among Pro-"testant dissenters. The labours of a *Clarke* and a *Butler* were associated "with those of a *Doddridge*, a *Leland*, and a *Lardner*, with such equal "reputation and success, as to make it evident that the intrinsic excellence "of religion needs not the aid of external appendages; but that, with or "without a dowry, her charms are of sufficient power to fix and engage "the heart."

Happy will it be if this passage shall produce its proper effects both on the dissenters and on the clergy of the establishment; if it shall animate the former to a noble rivalship of exertion in the general cause of religion; and if it shall dispose the latter to view the dissenters no longer with suspicion on

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account of theological differences of inferior moment, and of *supposed* political differences, but to regard them with the affection which is due to fellow-christians, and fellow-soldiers in the army of religion and of truth. Unfortunate animosities and fatal suspicions have arisen between them, from causes which were, perhaps, irresistible. Neither party, probably, is entirely blameless. If the dissenters, following the example of Mr. Hall, will sacrifice the pride of a sect to the cause of religion, they will at least have the merit of making a fair experiment on the temper of the church; and it will be ascertained whether the established clergy of our days will receive the successors of Leland and Lardner, as these illustrious men were received by the most distinguished prelates of their times. We have no doubt that the experiment would be successful, and that the result of such an amicable struggle would be a new triumph for christianity, both in the defeat of her enemies, and in the closer union of all her children; in the establishment of christian truth, and in the diffusion of christian charity: so that infidelity may at length not only be exposed, but shamed and silenced, and those sects which continue to differ in inferior questions of opinion and discipline may at least agree in forbearance and mutual kindness. Mr. Hall has shewn the example to his brethren, and held out the invitation to those from whom he dissents. He has done his duty to his country and to his religion, and he has done it nobly. Let us hope that he has not sown his seed in a barren soil.

Though Mr. Hall, however, in our opinion, has victoriously established his principle with respect to this part of the subject, [the power of religion in producing the higher class of virtues,] he is with reason convinced that the *indirect* influence of religion, as it enters into our sentiments and forms our character, is much more extensive and important than its *direct* influence, as arising from a deliberate regard to the happiness or misery of another life, and from its fitness to fill up that chasm that is founded merely on the utility of virtue in the present world. It is on the subject of the *indirect* influence of religion, that he has chiefly displayed all the powers of his vigorous understanding, and all the stores of his richly endowed mind. It is here that he exhibits an union of comprehensive philosophy with animated and splendid eloquence, of which few other examples are to be found. It is here, on a subject which has been discussed and (it might have been thought) exhausted by the greatest men of many successive ages, that Mr. Hall has given the most decisive proof of his genius, by many arguments and reflections which are at once original, just, and profound. Those who are familiar with moral discussions know the extreme difficulty of producing even a *new paradox*, on subjects which have so often and so long employed all the powers of the human understanding. It is easy for men of sense to deliver very important moral truths, if they will content themselves with repeating and enforcing what has been often said before, which we are far from denying to be very useful, and indeed absolutely necessary. It is possible, though not easy, for men of ingenuity, if they merely seek singularity, and throw off all regard to truth and the interests of mankind, to discover some new path in the wilderness of error, which no former hunter of paradoxes had explored. To be *original* and *just*, however, is on all subjects very difficult; and it is a mark of the highest superiority of understanding,

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when displayed on a subject which seemed so nearly exhausted as the connexion between morality and religion.

If we were to indulge our own feelings without regard to the limits of our review, we should scarcely know when to finish our extracts, or how to bound our praises. This sermon, indeed, is in every respect entitled to rank among the first productions of the age. It is distinguished by solid and profound philosophy; the very reverse of that sorry and shallow sophistry which has of late usurped the name. It breathes a spirit of humility, piety, and charity; worthy of that pure and divine religion, to the defence of which the author has consecrated his talents. His eloquence is not a puny and gaudy bauble, fashioned by the tools and tricks of a mechanical rhetorician; it is the natural effusion of a fertile imagination, of an ardent mind, and of a heart glowing with zeal for truth, with reverence for God, and with love for men. His style is easy, various, and animated; not free, indeed, from those petty incorrectnesses, which seem to be scarcely separable from natural composition, but perfectly exempt from affectation, a blemish far more unpardonable than negligence, and into which those who too studiously avoid carelessness have in general been too liable to fall. On a review of all his various excellencies, we cannot but expect with confidence that the name of Mr. Hall will be placed by posterity with the illustrious names of Paley and of Watson, among the best writers of the age, as well as the most vigorous defenders of religious truth, and the brightest examples of Christian charity.

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2. *From Sir James Mackintosh's Review of Proceedings in the case of Benjamin Flower. British Critic, August*, 1800.

He tells us in his preface, "There is no one living more guarded in bring-" ing unsubstantial charges than myself." p. 17. He also observes, that "the " mere change of sentiment is not in itself criminal, it is sometimes virtuous." p. 22. After these declarations, we should of course have expected that he would not have applied the most contumelious and opprobrious language to virtuous men, on no better pretext than that of a "mere change of sentiment." As this "change" might be "virtuous," all "charges" founded only upon it must be "unsubstantiated." Now mark the conduct of this man, and let him be tried by his own principles. Mr. Hall, his townsman, and, as we understand, formerly his pastor, is well known to have lately published a most admirable Sermon, in which he employed all the powers of reason, and all the vigour and splendour of eloquence, in displaying the abominable consequences of Atheism. "*The very head and front of his offending hath this extent, no farther.*" His whole guilt consisted in this: that, being a minister of christianity, he had the *illiberality* and cruelty to attack poor Atheism, and its meek and unbloody apostles, the amiable French republicans. For this great crime, this miserable scribbler attempts to raise a louder clamour against Mr. Hall, than has been raised against other dissenting ministers for renouncing their belief in God. Bishops may be libelled, kings may be slandered, all laws, human and divine, may be insulted and reviled; but France and Atheism are sacred things, which it seems no Englishman, or at least no dissenting minister, is to attack with impunity;

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which he cannot reason against without having his character stigmatized as a time-server; the warm language of his youth cited against his more mature opinions; and all the prejudices of his sect, or even of his congregation, artfully inflamed against his good name, his professional usefulness, and, perhaps, his professional existence. The black and fell malignity, which pervades this man's attack on Mr. Hall, raises it to a sort of diabolical importance, of which its folly, and ignorance, and vulgarity, cannot entirely deprive it. This must be our excuse for stooping so low as to examine it.

His first charge is, that Mr. Hall now speaks of the French Revolution in different language from that which he used in 1793. How many men have retained the same opinions on that subject? There may be some, and Mr. Benjamin Flower may be one; for there are men who have hearts too hard to be moved by crimes, or heads too stupid to be instructed by experience. The second accusation against Mr. Hall is, that he has imputed a great part of the horrors of the last ten years to the immoral, antisocial, and barbarising spirit of Atheism. Will this man deny, on principles of reason, that Atheism has such a tendency? If he does, what becomes of his pretended zeal for religion? Or will he, on the authority of experience, deny that Atheism has actually produced such effects? If he does, we refer him, not to Professor Robison, or the Abbé Barruel, of whose labours he, as might be expected, speaks with real rancour and affected contempt; but to the works of Atheists and anarchists themselves, which he will think much better authority. Has he read the correspondence of Voltaire, of Diderot, of D'Alembert? Has he consulted any of the publications which have issued during the last ten years from the Paris press? Does he know that all the fanatical Atheists of Europe (and England is not free from this pest) almost publicly boast that in thirty years no man in a civilized country will believe in God? Has he never heard that the miners of Cornwall were instigated to sell their clothes in order to purchase the impious ravings of Tom Paine; or that they were gratuitously distributed among the people of Scotland, with such fatal effects, that a large body of that once religious people made a bonfire of their Bibles, in honour of the new apostle? Has he been informed that the London Corresponding Society (enlightened by the *Système de la Nature*, of which the translation was hawked in penny numbers at every stall in the Metropolis) deliberated whether they ought not to uncitizen Tom Paine, for superstitiously professing *some* belief in the existence of God? DOES HE KNOW THAT THE SAME SOCIETY RESOLVED, THAT THE BELIEF OF A GOD WAS SO PERNICIOUS AN OPINION, AS TO BE AN EXCEPTION TO THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF TOLERATION? Does he perceive the mischievous and infernal art with which only Deism is preached to the deluded peasantry of Scotland, while Atheism is reserved for the more illuminated ruffians of London? ALL THIS, AND PROBABLY MUCH MORE, WE FEAR HE KNOWS BUT TOO WELL! Yet it is in the midst of these symptoms of a meditated revolt against all religion, and of bloody persecution practised wherever Atheists are strong, and projected where they are weak, against the christian worship, and all its ministers of all sects and persuasions, that this man has the effrontery to make it a matter of accusation against Mr. Hall, that he exhorted nonconformists, *not to abandon their dissent*, but merely to unite their efforts with those of the church, in resisting the progress of Atheism. He, it seems, hates the church more than he loves

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religion. He has more zeal for dissent than for the belief of the existence of a Deity. His pious zeal would prefer slavery, under the disciples of *Condorcet* and *Volney*, to a temporary co-operation with the church which produced *Taylor* and *Barrow!* That such should be the sentiments of an obscure scribbler, is a matter of small moment; though, notwithstanding his complaints of the state of the press, this is the first time, since England was a nation, that any man would have dared to publish them. But that such should be the sentiments of a numerous sect continuing to call themselves Christians, would indeed be a matter of very serious consideration. But it cannot be. The body of Dissenters will hasten to disavow such detestable sentiments. They will acknowledge as their representative, not this libeller, but the eloquent and philosophical preacher, whom he has so foully slandered; whom no dissenting minister has surpassed in talents, and whom none has equalled or even nearly approached in taste and elegance of composition.

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3. *From the Notes to Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon. Easter*, 1800.

After defending Mr. Hall from the censures of those who blamed him for styling Hooker, "great and judicious," he proceeds thus:

In common with all men of letters, I read with exquisite delight Mr. Hall's sermon, lately published. As compositions, his former works are replete with excellence; but his last approaches to perfection, μετα του σεμνου την χαριν ἐχει. He apologizes for its length, but the apology was unnecessary: for every man of taste and virtue will apply to this publication, what Photius said upon the λειμωναριον of Joannes Moschus, ἐξ ἁπαντων το χρησιμον ὁ συνετος και ὁ θεοφιλης ἀνηρ δρεπομενος, ουκ ἀν των συντεταγμενων κορον καταγνοιη. Bacon tells us that "the contemplative Atheist is rare, and that Atheism did never perturb states, because it makes men weary of themselves as looking no farther." But I agree with Mr. Hall, that "the present times furnish a melancholy exception to this general observation;" and Mr. Hall probably will agree with Bacon, "that superstition also has been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new primum mobile, that ravisheth all the spheres of government." (Bacon's 17th and 18th Essays). The liveliness of Mr. Hall's imagination, and the strength of his feelings, may now and then have led him to speak rather too strongly in each of his late publications. In the former, [the Apology for the Freedom of the Press], I thought that he ascribed too much to the effects of Popery under the French monarchy; and, in the latter, too much to the effects of philosophy in the French Revolution. But, in both works, he has made many wise and interesting observations; in both he has preserved a most beautiful and animated stile; through both he has been actuated, I believe, by the purest motives; and by the last more especially, he has deserved well from every friend to civilized society and pure religion. I am not sure that Mr. Hall stands in need of any vindication upon the score of inconsistency; but I *am* sure that he is most able to vindicate himself against accusations really strong, if such there be, and I am equally sure that he has too much candour and too much magnanimity to persist in any error, which his own sagacity may discover, or the objections of his antagonists shall clearly prove.

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Having stated my wishes, that in a few, I mean a very few, instances, Mr. Hall had been a little more wary in pushing his principles to consequences, which they may not quite warrant, I will give my general opinion of him in the words that were employed to describe a prelate, whose writings, I believe, are familiar to him, and whom he strongly resembles, not perhaps in variety of learning, but in fertility of imagination, in vigour of thinking, in rectitude of intention, and holiness of life. Yes, Mr. Hall, like Bishop Taylor, "has the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, and the piety of a saint."

Sincere as my attachment is to Protestantism, I confess that I have been pained by some outrageous invectives that have been lately thrown out against the Church of Rome; and at the present crisis, I must further confess, that they appear to me not only unjust, but indiscreet, and even inhuman. Let me remind the accusers of Mr. Hall, that, in the estimation of Lord Bacon, "divisions in religion, if they be many, introduce Atheism;" —"that there is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think they do best by going farthest from what they think the superstition formerly received; and, therefore, care should be had that the good be not taken away with the bad, which commonly is done when the people is the reformer." Among those who censure Mr. Hall, there may be thoughtless and injudicious persons, who often repeat the witty and decisive answer of Sir Henry Wotton to the priest, who asked, "Where was your religion to be found before Luther?" Let me then recall to their memory the advice which Sir Henry gave to one, whose earnestness exceeded his knowledge, and who was perpetually railing against the Papists: "Pray, Sir, forbear, till you have studied the points better; for the wise Italians have this proverb, '*He that understandeth amiss concludes worse;*' and take heed of thinking, the farther you go from the Church of Rome, the nearer you are to God." To men of sounder judgment and more candid dispositions, I would recommend the serious perusal of "Cassandri Consultatio," of Grotius's notes upon it, and his three replies to Rivetus. When they read the "Syllabus Librorum et Epistolarum doctorum aliquot et priorum virorum," in the third volume of Grotius's works, they may cease to think Mr. Hall singular, when he remarks, in his preface, "How trivial, for the most part, are the controversies of Christians "with each other!" They may be disposed to join him in his prayer, that "Ephraim may no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim;" and they may be converted to the wise and salutary opinion of Grotius, "Quam non sit difficilis in Religione Conciliatio, si controvertendi studium vitetur!"

NOTE C.—[See Page 85.]

Character of Mr. Hall as a Preacher,

From the London Magazine, No. XIV. Feb. 1, 1821. *Written by the Editor, Mr. John Scott, Author of Visits to Paris, &c.*

Some of them (the dissenting ministers) are, at the present day, exhibiting no ordinary gifts and energies; and to the most distinguished of these, we propose to direct the attention of our readers.

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Mr. Hall, though, perhaps, the most distinguished ornament of the Calvinistic* dissenters, does not afford the best opportunity for criticism. His excellence does not consist in the predominance of one of his powers, but in the exquisite proportion and harmony of all. The richness, variety, and extent of his knowledge, are not so remarkable as his absolute mastery over it. He moves about in the loftiest sphere of contemplation, as though he were "native and endued to its element." He uses the finest classical allusions, the noblest images, and the most exquisite words, as though they were those which came first to his mind, and which formed his natural dialect. There is not the least appearance of straining after greatness in his most magnificent excursions, but he rises to the loftiest heights with a child-like ease. His style is one of the clearest and simplest—the least encumbered with its own beauty—of any which ever has been written. It is bright and lucid as a mirror, and its most highly-wrought and sparkling embellishments are like ornaments of crystal, which, even in their brilliant inequalities of surface, give back to the eye little pieces of the true imagery set before them.

The works of this great preacher, are, in the highest sense of the term, imaginative, as distinguished not only from the didactic, but from the fanciful. He possesses "the vision and faculty divine," in as high a degree as any of our writers in prose. His noblest passages do but make truth visible in the form of beauty, and "clothe upon" abstract ideas, till they become palpable in exquisite shapes. The dullest writer would not convey the same meaning in so few words, as he has done in the most sublime of his illustrations. Imagination, when like his, of the purest water, is so far from being improperly employed on divine subjects, that it only finds its real objects in the true and the eternal. This power it is which disdains the scattered elements of beauty, as they appear distinctly in an imperfect world, and strives by accumulation, and by rejecting the alloy cast on all things, to embody to the mind that ideal beauty which shall be realized hereafter. This, by shedding a consecrating light on all it touches, and "bringing them into one," anticipates the future harmony of creation. This already sees the "soul of goodness in things evil," which shall one day change the evil into its likeness. This already begins the triumph over the separating powers of death and time, and renders their victory doubtful, by making us feel the immortality of the affections. Such is the faculty which is employed by Mr. Hall to its noblest uses. There is no rhetorical flourish—no mere pomp of words—in his most eloquent discourses. With vast excursive power, indeed, he can range through all the glories of the Pagan world, and seizing those traits of beauty, which they derived from primeval revelation, restore them to the system of truth. But he is ever best when he is intensest—when he unveils the mighty foundations of the rock of ages—or makes the hearts of his hearers vibrate with a strange joy, which they will recognize in more exalted stages of their being.

Mr. Hall has unfortunately committed but few of his discourses to the

* We use this epithet merely as that which will most distinctively characterize the extensive class to which it is applied, well aware that there are shades of difference among them, and that many of them would decline to call themselves after any name but that of Christ.

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press. His sermon on the tendencies of Modern Infidelity, is one of the noblest specimens of his genius. Nothing can be more fearfully sublime than the picture which he gives of the desolate state, to which Atheism would reduce the world; or more beautiful and triumphant, than his vindication of the social affections. His Sermon on the Death of the Princess Charlotte, contains a philosophical and eloquent developement of the causes which make the sorrows of those who are encircled by the brightest appearances of happiness, peculiarly affecting; and gives an exquisite picture of the gentle victim adorned with sacrificial glories. His Discourses on War—on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister—and on the Work of the Holy Spirit—are of great and various excellence. But, as our limits will allow only a single extract, we prefer giving the close of a Sermon preached in the prospect of the invasion of England by Napoleon, in which he blends the finest remembrance of the antique world—the dearest associations of British patriotism—and the pure spirit of the gospel—in a strain as noble as could be poured out by Tyrtæus.

[The passages quoted are from pp. 183—192, Vol. I.]

There is nothing very remarkable in Mr. Hall's manner of delivering his sermons. His simplicity, yet solemnity of deportment, engage the attention, but do not promise any of his most rapturous effusions. His voice is feeble, but distinct, and as he proceeds, trembles beneath his images, and conveys the idea that the spring of sublimity and beauty in his mind, is exhaustless, and would pour forth a more copious stream, if it had a wider channel than can be supplied by the bodily organs. The plainest, and least inspired of his discourses, are not without delicate gleams of imagery, and felicitous turns of expression. He expatiates on the prophecies with a kindred spirit, and affords awful glimpses into the valley of vision. He often seems to conduct his hearers to the top of the "Delectable Mountains," whence they can see from afar the glorious gates of the eternal city. He seems at home among the marvellous revelations of St. John; and while he expatiates on them, leads his hearers breathless, through ever-varying scenes of mystery, far more glorious and surprising than the wildest of oriental fables. He stops when they most desire that he should proceed—when he has just disclosed the dawnings of the inmost glory to their enraptured minds—and leaves them full of imaginations of "things not made with hands,"—of joys too ravishing for smiles—and of impulses which wing their hearts "along the line of limitless desires."

NOTE D.—[See page 114.]

An Extract of a Letter from Dr. Prichard.

The following extract of a letter, from Dr. Prichard to Dr. Frederick Thackeray, of Cambridge, describing concisely the results of the *post mortem* examination, unfolds the cause of Mr. Hall's acute suffering for so many years.

"We found the heart diseased in substance, and the muscular structure soft, and looking like macerated cellular membrane; the left ventricle was

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judged to be one third larger than usual. The whole of the aorta was diseased; the internal membrane, in parts where it had not been in contact with blood, of a bright scarlet colour, which increased in deepness, and in the abdominal part of the artery was of a red purple hue. It contained, in several places, patches of bony matter about the size of a sixpence. This was the case particularly about the origin of the arteria innominata. The lungs were healthy. The kidney on the right side was *entirely filled* by a large, rough, pointed, calculus. There was also an exostosis on the body of the fourth dorsal vertebra, about the third of an inch in height and prominent. This was too high to be the cause of the long-continued pain, which must have arisen from the renal calculus.

"The gall bladder was quite full of calculi, though he had never experienced any symptoms referring to the liver or biliary secretion.

"Probably no man ever went through more physical suffering than Mr. Hall; he was a fine example of the triumph of the higher powers of mind exalted by religion, over the infirmities of the body. His loss will long be felt in this place, not only by persons of his own communion, but by all that have any esteem for what is truly great and good."

NOTE E.—[See page 114.]

SKETCHES OF MR. HALL'S CHARACTER, ESPECIALLY AS MANIFESTED IN PRIVATE LIFE.*

MR. HALL seemed to me† very remarkable for being always in earnest. He was a perfect contrast to Socrates, who, as you will recollect, was called the ironist, from his constant assumption of a character that did not belong to him. Mr. Hall did not practise the Socratic irony. He never said one thing and meant another. He was earnest even in his wit and humour. It was never his design to impose on any person, and he was entirely free from suspicion. He was artless as a child. A sort of infantine simplicity was conspicuous in many parts of his conduct. With his extraordinary capacity, and a propension for abstract and refined thinking, it was curious and remarkable to observe the interest that he took in the present object. He threw himself entirely into whatever might be the topic of conversation, and seemed altogether engrossed with what pressed on the sense, and solicited immediate attention. It was perhaps owing to this interest in the present object, together with an undecaying vivacity of feeling, that he appeared to enjoy with the keenest relish, whatever tended to innocent pleasure. Gratifications that usually give delight only in the earlier periods of life, he enjoyed to the very last, as if he had not advanced beyond boyhood.

* The great accordance in some striking particulars, of these independent sketches of Mr. Hall, gives them, in those respects, almost the air of tautology. But I venture to retain the whole, to shew in how many essential points, every competent judge, formed necessarily the same estimate.

† The Rev. William Anderson, Classical Tutor at the Baptist Education Society.

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His powers of conversation were very extraordinary, and discovered quite as great abilities as appeared in his preaching, or writings. He seemed equally capable of talking clearly, forcibly, copiously, beautifully, on every subject, however common it might be, or however abstruse and remote from the course of general thought and conversation. He avoided, rather than invited, discourse on those subjects that might have been supposed to be most congenial with the cast and habit of his mind, and the current of his studies and speculations. He never *usurped* conversation, nor shewed any disposition to give it any particular direction. He laid hold of casual topics of every kind, apparently to beguile the time, rather than as the occasions of imparting his knowledge, diffusing his wisdom, or turning them to any serious, or practical purpose.

It was impossible to be often with Mr. Hall, and not be struck with the degree of nature that prevailed in all his words and actions, and in the whole of his bearing. Incidents, parts of conversations, that when separated from the circumstances in which they took place, have an air of eccentricity and affectation, seemed perfectly natural as they occurred. All easily and spontaneously arose from the structure and usual operation of his mind, and the surrounding circumstances. There was no aim on his part to be singular, no effort to excite surprise, or catch admiration.

A very prominent quality of his mind seemed to be benevolence. He sympathized most deeply with all forms of distress, and endeavoured to afford relief, by suitable suggestions, by the exertions of his talents, and by pecuniary aid, to the full extent of his means. It was easy to discern in him, a great concern and anxiety to render those that were about him as comfortable as possible, and a visible delight in the pleasure of his friends. Akin to his great benevolence was an unusual sensibility to kindness. Little services, offices of respect, and affection, small endeavours to promote his comfort, that would generally be considered as matters of course, even from those whose relation to him made the action a duty, would diffuse a gleam of benignity and satisfaction, and draw forth lively expressions of gratitude.

Perhaps the character of Mr. Hall's mind * cannot be better described in a single word than by saying that it is perfectly balanced, and combines all the various powers in their highest perfection. If he possessed any one faculty in the same exuberance in which he possesses them all, and in respect to the others were not in the least distinguished, it would be enough to render him an extraordinary man. If he reasons, it is always with strict philosophical accuracy; with a keen, searching glance into the very mysteries of his subject, leaving the reader or hearer often at a loss whether most to admire the light, or the strength, or the depth of his argument; and generally leaving his antagonist to the alternative of quiet submission, or of

* From the Rev. Dr. Sprague, of Albany, New York, author of a most interesting and instructive volume on "Revivals of Religion" in America. This gentleman, when in England in 1828, spent some time at Bristol. The account from which I select the above passage, was written before Mr. Hall's death.

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preparing for a still more mortifying defeat. If he comes into the region of taste or imagination, here also he is equally at home. With the same apparent ease that his mind can frame a powerful argument, it will pour forth images of exquisite beauty and tenderness, as well as of overwhelming majesty and strength. In short, there is no part of the intellectual world in which he does not seem to breathe freely, as if it were his peculiar element. He is at home as far below the surface of things, as far down in the depths of metaphysical abstraction, as perhaps any mind ever penetrates. He is at home amidst the common-sense realities of life, judging of men and things with as much accuracy, as if the whole business of his life had been to watch and analyze the operations of the human heart. He is at home in the field of fancy, in worlds of his own creation: and he can find in the mountain and in the valley, in the ocean and the sky, in the storm and the lightning, in every thing in the kingdom of nature and providence, a field where his imagination may expatiate with unlimited power. His acquisitions correspond, in a good degree, to his original endowments. It were not to be expected, indeed, it were not possible, that he could have gone extensively into every department of science and learning, in which his great and versatile mind would have enabled him to become pre-eminent; we suppose his favourite studies to have been the science of morals and theology, though he has shewn himself deeply versed in political economy, and the various branches of polite literature. His knowledge of the ancient and modern classics is extensive and exact; and if we mistake not, they make part of his every-day reading, even at this advanced period of life.

We remember to have been equally delighted and astonished at hearing him converse for an hour upon the philosophy of language, in a style which discovered a degree of reflection and research, from which one might have supposed that it was not only a favourite topic, but that he had made it the study of his life.

It were naturally to be expected, an intellect of such uncommon strength should be associated with a corresponding strength of feeling. This is true, in respect to Mr. Hall; and it is no doubt to the power of his feelings, that the world is indebted for some of the most brilliant and useful of his efforts. A man of dull temperament, let his intellect be what it might, could never produce those fine strains of soul-stirring eloquence, in which it is the privilege of Mr. Hall to pour out even his common thoughts. But with all the strength of his feelings, his heart is full of kindness and affection. In all his intercourse he is noble and generous. His attachments are strong and enduring. He is open and honest in respect to every thing and every body. As no one can approach him without a deep feeling of respect, so no one can be admitted to the hospitality of his fireside and the privilege of his friendship, without finding that the sentiment of respect is fast ripening into that of cordial and affectionate attachment.

In private conversation Mr. Hall is the admiration and delight of every circle in which he mingles. He converses a great deal, partly because when his mind is excited it is not easy for him to be silent, and partly because there is so much in his conversation to interest and edify, that almost every one who is in his company regards it as a privilege to listen rather than talk, and acts accordingly. We have been struck with the fact, that, let the

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conversation turn upon whatever subject it may, even though it be a subject on which he might be expected to be least at home, he is equally ready, equally eloquent. He possesses, beyond any man we have known, the faculty of bringing facts and principles which are stored up in his mind, instantly to bear upon any given subject; throwing around it at once, to the mind of the hearer, the clear strong light in which it appears to his own. This must be owing, partly to the original power which he possesses, of discerning almost intuitively, even the most remote relations of things to each other, and partly to the perfect order with which all his intellectual acquisitions are arranged. In the midst of an involved discussion, he will bring to his aid insulated facts from the various departments of knowledge, without the least hesitation or effort, just as we have known some men who had a remarkable attachment to order, able to enter their library, and lay their hand on any book at pleasure in the dark. But, notwithstanding he converses so much, there is not the semblance of an obtrusive or ostentatious manner; nothing that seems to say that he is thinking of his own superiority; on the contrary, he seems to forget, and sometimes makes those around him forget, the greatness of the man, in the greatness which he throws around his subject. He has a strong passion for sarcasm, which often comes out in his conversation, and sometimes with prodigious effect. He is, however, by no means severe in the common estimate which he forms of character; so far from it, that he treats characters for the most part with unusual lenity, and sometimes seems delighted with exhibitions of intellect from others, which would have appeared to every one else, far below the most common-place efforts of his own mind.

In his converse, as well as in his ministrations, no one could avoid being struck by a certain naturalness and simplicity, peculiar to himself, and rendered the more remarkable and engaging by its union with such consummate intelligence and eloquence.* His companion or hearer was alike surprised and charmed by the harmonious contrast of excellencies, so dissimilar, yet in him so perfectly combined.

In all that he uttered, whether in social or sacred discourse, there was a vivid freshness and raciness of thought and expression that marked it as the growth of his own mind, and gave an interest to his familiar remarks, as well as to the more elaborate productions of his mighty genius. Possessed of art and refinement in the highest degree, he had the rare and strange felicity of retaining unimpaired the charm of native beauty.

Among the predominant qualities of his nature, one of the most obvious was his openness, his ingenuous unreserve, his social communicativeness. Conversation was not less his congenial element, than contemplation. He evidently delighted to disclose and impart the accumulated stores of his mind; while he seemed to luxuriate in that unequalled fluency of graceful or energetic language with which he was gifted. The warmth of his affections was proportioned to the strength of his intellect. His own mental opulence did not make him independent on the converse and friendship of

* Communicated by the Rev. Thomas Grinfield, A. M. of Clifton.

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those who were poor in comparison with himself. He felt, in the language of Cicero, and as he has elegantly portrayed his feelings in the sermon on the death of Dr. Ryland, that, "Caritate et benevolentia sublata, omnis est è "vita sublata jucunditas."

The benevolence of his capacious heart greatly contributed at once to inspire and increase his love of society and conversation; while, in the social circle, and in the solemn assembly, he appeared as a distinguished representative, a most expressive organ of our nature, in all its more familiar sentiments, or in all its more sublime conceptions and aspirations. Hence he was regarded by the multitudes who sought his public or his private presence, as a kind of universal property, whom all parties had a right to enjoy, and none to monopolize: before him, all forgot their denominations, as he appeared to forget his own, in the comprehensive idea of the Church of Christ.

In recollecting the moral features of his character, it is impossible to forget the consummate truth and sincerity, which left its unequivocal stamp on all he said, of which a suspicion never occurred to any one, and which gave to his discourses a solidity and an impressiveness, which, otherwise, their argument and eloquence could never have commanded. Never has there been a stronger, a more universal confidence in the sacred orator, as one whose eloquence was kindled in his own heart; never were the testimony of faith, and the rapture of hope, exhibited in a more manifestly genuine, unaffected, and consequently in a more convincing form. His was truly the "generoso incoctum pectus Honesto." This added to his ministry a singular and inestimable charm. Hence, more than any other advocate of evangelical principles, he was revered, even by the irreligious. His peculiar ascendancy over such was not acquired by any degree of compromise in his exhibition of spiritual religion; it was the involuntary result of their conviction that his earnestness was as perfect as his eloquence. Never can there have been a preacher more strikingly characterized by a dignified simplicity, a majesty unalloyed by pomp: never was there a finer combination of the utmost manliness and grandeur with the utmost delicacy and pathos. No wonder that such qualities, combined in such perfection, should have produced so strong and so extensive an enchantment.

It must be acknowledged that the moral graces of his character derived a peculiar and accidental advantage from the intellectual power and splendour with which they were united; a remark, particularly applicable to that child-like simplicity by which he was distinguished, and to that delicate and refined modesty, which was the natural indication of an interior and inwrought humility. "Be clothed with Humility," was the subject of his last lecture preparatory to the communion, the last entire address which I heard from his lips; (Jan. 1831) and, as I returned in company with some members of the Church of England, who privileged themselves with hearing him on these monthly opportunities, we were all impressed by the force which his pathetic exhortation acquired from his own conspicuous example of the grace he had recommended. His humility gave a charm to his character, and to his preaching, which all his more brilliant qualities, without it, could not have supplied; while it served as a dark back-ground, from which their brilliant contrast rose the more impressive and sublime.

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In thus slightly glancing at some of the more retired graces with which he was adorned, I cannot dismiss the hasty and unfinished sketch without referring to that sweet sunshine of serenity, cheerfulness, and bland good nature, which, unobscured by so much acute or wearing pain, habitually beamed in his noble aspect, and diffused its genial influence alike over his converse and his preaching. A friend, subject to constitutional depression of spirits, assured me that, on several occasions, he has found his sadness soothed by the balm of a visit or a sermon, for which he had resorted to Mr. Hall. Nothing morose, nothing gloomy, either in his natural temper, or in his religious views, impaired the fascination of his presence, or the benefit of his ministry.

The remembrance of such a man, especially as it is now embalmed and sanctified by death, (and his death was altogether in harmony with his character,) cannot leave any other than a beneficial influence, ennobling and elevating to the mind and the heart. The name of "Robert Hall" is rich in sacred, as well as splendid, associations; a memento of consecrated intellect and energy; an inspiring watch-word for the cultivation of christian graces and of heavenly affections; an antidote to all that is unworthy in principle or practice; an attraction to whatever, in the intellectual or moral system, bears the stamp of unaffected excellence; whatever qualifies for the fruition of spiritual and eternal blessings; whatever is allied to the love of CHRIST AND GOD.

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OBSERVATIONS

ON

MR. HALL'S CHARACTER AS A PREACHER.

BY JOHN FOSTER.

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OBSERVATIONS

ON

MR. HALL'S CHARACTER AS A PREACHER.

The biographical and literary illustrations of Mr. Hall's character and performances, expected from the highly qualified Editor of his works, and from the eminent person who has engaged for a part of that tribute to his memory,* may render any formal attempt in addition liable to be regarded as both superfluous and intrusive; the public, besides, have been extensively and very long in possession of their own means of forming that judgement which has pronounced him the first preacher of the age: and again, so soon after the removal of such a man, while the sentiments of friendship and admiration are finding their natural expression in the language of unrestrained eulogy, it is hardly permitted to assume a judicial impartiality. From these considerations it has been with very great reluctance that I have consented, in compliance with the wishes of some of Mr. Hall's friends, to attempt a short description of what he was in the special capacity of a preacher; a subject which must indeed be of chief account in *any* memorial of him; but may also admit of being taken in some degree separately from the general view of his life, character, and writings.

For more reasons than that it must be one cause, added to others, of an imperfect competence to describe him in that capacity, I have to regret the disadvantage of not having been, more than very occasionally, perhaps hardly ten times in all, a hearer of Mr. Hall till within the last few years of his life. It appears to be the opinion of all those attendants on his late

* These observations were written, and transmitted to the publishers, a considerable time before the lamented and unexpected decease of Sir J. Mackintosh. A very few slight notes have been added in the last revisal for the press.

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ministrations, who had also been his hearers in former times, (and from recollection of the few sermons which I heard many years since my own impression would be the same), that advancing age, together with the severe and almost continual pressure of pain, had produced a sensible effect on his preaching, perceptible in an abatement of the energy and splendour of his eloquence. He was less apt to be excited to that intense ardour of emotion and utterance which so often, animating to the extreme emphasis a train of sentiments impressive by their intrinsic force, had held dominion over every faculty of thought and feeling in a large assembly. It is not meant, however, that a considerable degree of this ancient fire did not frequently appear glowing and shining again. Within the course of a moderate number of sermons there would be one or more which brought back the preacher of the times long past, to the view of those who had heard him in those times.

I have reason to believe, that this representation of his diminished energy should be nearly limited to a very late period, the period when an increased, but reluctant, use of opiates became absolutely necessary, to enable him to endure the pain which he had suffered throughout his life, and when another obscure malady was gradually working towards a fatal termination. For at a time not more than seven or eight years since, I heard in close succession several sermons delivered in so ardent an excitement of sentiment and manner as I could not conceive it possible for himself, or any other orator to have surpassed. Even so lately as within the last four or five years of his life, the recurrence of something approaching to this was not so infrequent as to leave any apprehension that it might not soon be displayed again.

There was some compensation for the abatement of this character of force and vehemence, supplied by a certain tone of kindness, a milder pathos, more sensibly expressive of benevolence toward his hearers, than the impetuous, the almost imperious energy, so often predominant when an undepressed vitality of the physical system was auxiliary to the utmost excitement of his mind.

There seems to be a perfect agreement of opinion that a considerable decline of the power or the activity of his *imagination* was evident in the latter part of his life. The felicities of figure and allusion of all kinds, sometimes illustrative by close analogy,

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often gay and humorous, sometimes splendid, less abounded in his conversation. And in his public discourses there appeared to be a much rarer occurrence of those striking images in which a series of thoughts seemed to take fire in passing on, to end in a still more striking figure, with the effect of an explosion. So that, from persons who would occasionally go to hear him with much the same taste and notions as they would carry to a theatrical or mere oratorical exhibition, and caring little about religious truth and instruction, there might be heard complaints of disappointment, expressed in terms of more than hinted depreciation. They had hardly any other idea of eloquence, even that of the pulpit, than that it must be *brilliant*; and they certainly might happen to hear (at the late period in question) several of his sermons which had not more than a very moderate share of this attraction. But even such persons, if disposed to attend his preaching regularly for a few weeks, might have been sure to hear some sermons in which the solidity of thought was finely inspirited with the sparkling quality they were requiring.

But whatever reduction his imagination may have suffered from age, and the oppression of disease and pain, it is on all hands admitted that there was no decline in what he valued far more in both himself and others, and what all, except very young or defectively cultivated persons, and inferior poets, must regard as the highest of mental endowments—the intellectual power. His wonderful ability for comprehending and reasoning; his quickness of apprehension, his faculty for analyzing a subject to its elements, for seizing on the essential points, for going back to principles and forward to consequences, and for bringing out into an intelligible and sometimes very obvious form, what appeared obscure or perplexed, remained unaltered to the last. This noble intellect, thus seen with a diminished lustre of imagination, suggested the idea of a lofty eminence raising its form and summit clear and bare toward the sky, losing nothing of its imposing aspect by absence of the wreaths of tinctured clouds which may have invested it at another season.

It is to be observed, that imagination had always been a subordinate faculty in his mental constitution. It was never of that prolific power which threw so vast a profusion over the oratory of Jeremy Taylor or of Burke; or which could tempt him to revel, for the pure luxury of the indulgence, as they

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appear to have sometimes done, in the exuberance of imaginative genius.

As a preacher, none of those contemporaries who have not seen him in the pulpit, or of his readers in another age, will be able to conceive an adequate idea of Mr. Hall. His personal appearance was in striking conformity to the structure and temper of his mind. A large-built, robust figure, was in perfect keeping with a countenance formed as if on purpose for the most declared manifestation of internal power, a power impregnable in its own strength, as in a fortress, and constantly, without an effort, in a state for action.* That countenance was usually of a cool unmoved mien at the beginning of the public service; and sometimes, when he was not greatly excited by his subject, or was repressed by pain, would not acquire a great degree of temporary expression during the whole discourse. At other times it would kindle into an ardent aspect as he went on, and toward the conclusion become lighted up almost into a glare. But, for myself, I doubt whether I was not quite as much arrested by his appearance in the interval while a short part of the service, performed without his assistance, immediately before the sermon, allowed him to sit in silence. With his eyes closed, his features as still as in death, and his head sinking down almost on his chest, he presented an image of entire abstraction. For a moment, perhaps, he would seem to awake to a perception of the scene before him, but instantly relapse into the same state. It was interesting to imagine the strong internal agency, which it was certain was then employed on the yet unknown subject about to be unfolded to the auditory.

His manner of public prayer, considered as an exercise of thought, was not exactly what would have been expected from a mind constituted like his. A manner so different in that exercise from its operation in all other employments could hardly have been unintentional; but on what principle it was preferred cannot be known or conjectured. It is to the *intellectual* consistence and order of his thoughts in public prayer that I am adverting, in uncertainty how far the opinion of others may have

* The portrait to accompany the Works, highly elaborated, and true to the general form and lineaments, fails to give exactly that stern, intense, and somewhat formidable *expression*, which the painter, Mr. Branwhite, was very successful in seizing, in spite of circumstances the most unfavourable for obtaining a likeness. Mr. Hall had an insuperable aversion to sit for his portrait.

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been the same: as to the *devotional* spirit, there could be but one impression. There was the greatest seriousness and simplicity, the plainest character of genuine piety, humble and prostrate before the Almighty. Both solemnity and good taste forbade indulgence in any thing showy or elaborately ingenious in such an employment. But there might have been, without an approach to any such impropriety, and as it always appeared to me, with great advantage, what I may venture to call a more *thinking* performance of the exercise; a series of ideas more reflectively conceived, and more connected and classed, if I may express it so, in their order. Many of the conceptions were not, individually, presented in that specific expression which conveys one certain thing to the apprehension; nor were there, generally speaking, those *trains* of petitionary thought, which would strongly fix, and for a while detain, the attention on each distinctly, in the succession of the subjects of devotional interest.

No one, I may presume, will be so mistaken as to imagine that *pieces of discussion*, formal developements of doctrine, nice casuistical distinctions, like sections of a theological essay, are meant in pleading that it must be of great advantage for engaging attention, exciting interest, and inducing reflection, that instead of a rapidly discursive succession of ideas, the leader of the devotions should often dwell awhile on one, and another important topic, and with a number of accumulated sentiments specifically appropriate to each; in order that its importance, thus exposed and aggravated, may constrain the auditory to reflect how deeply they are concerned in that one subject of petition. Any one pernicious thing deprecated—a spiritual evil, a vice of the heart or life, an easily besetting temptation, a perilous delusion into which men are liable to fall, or a temporal calamity,—and so, on the other hand, any one of the good gifts implored,—might thus be exposed in magnified and palpable importance before the minds of the people.

Will it be objected that this would tend to a practice not consistent either with the comprehensiveness of religion, or with the generality of scope requisite to adapt the prayer to the aggregate interests of a very mixed assemblage; that it would be to confine the attention to a few selected particulars of religion, losing the view of its wide compass; and to reduce the prayer which should be for all the people collectively regarded,

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to a set of adaptations to certain supposed individual cases, or small classes, singled out in the congregation, to the exclusion, in effect, of the general body? I may answer that, in perfect safety from shrinking into such speciality and exclusiveness, the great element of religion may be resolved into particular subjects and adaptations in public prayer. Particular parts of divine truth may come in view as suggesting matter of distinct and somewhat prolonged petition, conceived in terms that shall constantly and closely recognise the condition of the people. A man well exercised in religion, and well acquainted with the states and characters of men, might recount to himself a greater number of such topics than the longest book in the Bible comprises chapters; and would see that each of them might beneficially be somewhat amplified by thoughts naturally arising upon it; that one of them would be peculiarly appropriate to one portion of the assembly, another of them adapted to several conditions, and some of them commensurate with the interests of all. In one prayer of moderate length he might comprehend a number of these distinguishable topics, thus severally kept in view for a few moments; and varying them from time to time, he might bring the concerns which are the business of prayer, in *parts*, and with special effects, before the minds of the people, instead of giving the course of his thoughts every time to the guidance of entirely accidental and miscellaneous suggestion. I might ask, why should *sermons* be constructed to fix the attention of a mixed congregation on distinct parts of religion, instead of being, each in succession, vaguely discursive over the whole field? I would not say that the two exercises are under exactly the same law; but still, is there a propriety, that in a discourse for religious instruction some selected topics should stand forth in marked designation, to work one certain effect on the understanding or the feelings, and *no* propriety that any corresponding principle should be observed in those prayers which may be supposed to request, and with much more than a passing momentary interest, such things as that instruction would indicate as most important to be obtained?

But besides all this, there is no hazard in affirming, that prayers which do not detain the thoughts on any certain things in particular take very slight hold of the auditors. Things noted so transiently do not admit of a deliberate attention, and seem as if they did not claim it; the assembly are not made

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conscious how much they want what is petitioned for; and at the close would be at a loss to recollect any one part as having awaked a strong consciousness that *that* is what they have *themselves* in a special manner to pray for when alone.

Such observations are, under small limitation, applicable to Mr. Hall's public prayer. The succession of sentences appeared almost casual, or in a connexion too slight to hold the hearer's mind distinctly, for a time, to a certain object. A very large proportion of the series consisted of texts of Scripture; and as many of these were figurative, often requiring, in order to apprehend their plain sense, an act of thought for which there was not time, the mind was led on with a very defective conception of the exact import of much of the phraseology. He did not avail himself of the portion of Scripture he had just read, as a guiding suggestion of subjects for the prayer; and very seldom made it bear any particular relation to what was to follow as the subject of the discourse.

One could wish that, with the exception of very peculiar cases, *personalities*, when they must be introduced, should be as brief as possible in public prayer; especially such as point to individuals who are present, and whose own feelings, one should think, would earnestly deprecate their being made conspicuous objects of the prolonged attention of the congregation. Mr. Hall's consideration for individuals standing officially, or brought incidentally, in association with an assembly, often led him to a length and particularity in personal references, which one could not help regretting, as an encroachment on the time and the more proper concerns of the exercise, and as a sanction lent by an example of such high authority to a practice which leads the thoughts quite away from the interests in common; tempting the auditors into an impertinence of imagination about the persons so placed in exhibition, their characters, domestic circumstances, and so forth; with possibly a silent criticism, not much in harmony with devotion, on some flaw of consistency between the terms which the speaker is now employing, and those which he may be heard, or may have been heard, to use in other times and places respecting the same individuals. In the laudatory tone and epithets into which he inevitably glides, (for he never adverts to any *faults* of the persons thus prominently held in view, with prayer for their correction,) it is hardly possible for him, while the matter is kept long under

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operation, to avoid changing its colour, from that of reverence towards God, into that of compliment to a fellow mortal and fellow sinner.

If there was a defect of concentration, an indeterminateness in the direction of thought, in Mr. Hall's public prayers, the reverse was conspicuous in his preaching. He surpassed perhaps all preachers of recent times in the capital excellence of having a definite purpose, a distinct assignable subject, in each sermon. Sometimes, indeed, as when intruders had robbed him of all his time for study, or when his spirits had been consumed by a prolonged excess of pain, he was reduced to take the license of discoursing with less definite scope, on the common subjects of religion. But he was never pleased with any scheme of a sermon in which he could not, at the outset, say exactly what it was he meant to do. He told his friends that he always felt " he could do nothing with" a text or subject till it resolved and shaped itself into a topic of which he could see the form and outline, and which he could take out both from the extensive system of religious truth, and, substantially, from its connexion with the more immediately related parts of that system; at the same time not failing to indicate that connexion, by a few brief clear remarks to shew the consistency and mutual corroboration of the portions thus taken apart for separate discussion. This method insured to him and his hearers the advantage of an ample variety. Some of them remember instances in which he preached, with but a short interval, two sermons on what would have appeared, to common apprehension, but *one* subject, a very limitted section of doctrine or duty; yet the sermons went on quite different tracks of thought, presenting separate views of the subject, related to each other only by a general consistency. His survey of the extended field of religion was in the manner of a topographer, who fixes for a while on one separate district, and then on another, finding in each, though it were of very confined dimensions, many curious matters of research, and many interesting objects; while yet he shall possess the wide information which keeps the country at large so comprehensively within his view, that he can notice and illustrate, as he proceeds, all the characters of the relation of the parts to one another and to the whole.

The preacher uniformly began his sermons in a low voice, and with sentences of the utmost plainness both of thought and

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language. It was not, I believe, in observance of any precept of the rhetoricians, or with any conscious intention, that he did so; it was simply the manner in which his mind naturally set in for the consideration of an important subject. This perfect plainness of the introduction, quietly delivered in a voice deficient in tone and force, and difficult to be heard at first by a large part of the congregation, occasioned surprise and disappointment sometimes to strangers drawn by curiosity to hear "the celebrated orator," in the expectation, perhaps, of powerful sallies, flourishes, and fulminations. "Can this be he?" has been the question whispered between some two such expectants, seated together. A short comment on the facts in Scripture history found in connexion with the text, or which had been the occasion of the words; or on circumstances in the condition of the primitive church; or on some ancient or modern error relating to the subject to be proposed; would give, within the space of five or ten minutes, the condensed and perspicuous result of much reading and study. Sometimes he would go immediately to his subject, after a very few introductory sentences. And the attentive hearer was certain to apprehend what that subject was. It was stated precisely, yet in so simple a manner as to preclude all appearance of elaborate definition.

The distribution was always perfectly inartificial, cast in an order of the least formality of division that could mark an intelligible succession of parts, very seldom exceeding the number of three or four; which set forth the elements of the subject in the merest natural form, if I may express it so, of their subsistence. Generally, each of these parts was illustrated in two or three particulars, noted as first, second, and perhaps third. He never attempted, never thought of, those schemes of arrangement in which parts are ingeniously placed in antithesis, or in such other disposition as to reflect cross-lights on one another, producing surprise and curious expectation, with a passing glance of thought at the dexterity of the preacher who can work them in their contrasted positions to one ultimate effect. It is not denied that such ingenious and somewhat quaint devices of arrangement have had their advantage, in the hands of men who made them the vehicles of serious and important sentiment, really desirous not to amuse but to attract and instruct. They catch attention, make the progress and stages of the discourse more sensible by the

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transitions between points apparently so abruptly asunder, and leave more durable traces in the memory than, it was often complained, could be preserved of Mr. Hall's sermons. But such a mode was entirely foreign to the constitution and action of his mind. He never came on his subject by any thing like manœuvre; never approached it *sideways*; never sought to secure himself resources in particular parts, corners, and adjuncts, against the effects of a failure in the main substance; never threw out the force of a subject in off-sets; never expended it in dispersed varieties. He had it in one full single view before him, the parts lying in natural contiguity as a whole; and advanced straight forward in pursuance of a plain leading principle; looking to the right and the left just so far as to preserve the due breadth of the illustration.

This is meant as a description generally applicable to the earlier and middle portions of the discourse, which were often, as regarded in a purely intellectual view, much the most valuable.* It was highly interesting, even as a mere affair of reason, independently of the religious object, to accompany this part of his progress; from the announcement of his subject (sometimes in the form of a general proposition founded on the text, oftener in a more free exposition), onward through a series of statements, illustrations, and distinctions, till an important doctrine became unfolded to view, full in its explication, and strong in its evidence. In this progress, he would take account of any objections which he deemed it of consequence to obviate, meeting them without evasion, with acuteness and exact knowledge, available to the point. Every mode and resource of argument was at his command; but he was singularly successful in that which is technically denominated *reductio ad absurdum*. Many a specious notion and cavil was convicted of being not only erroneous, but foolish.

He displayed, in a most eminent degree, the rare excellence

* There was a remission of strict connexion of thought toward the conclusion, where he threw himself loose into a strain of declamation, always earnest, and often fervid. This was of great effect in securing a degree of favour with many, to whom so intellectual a preacher would not otherwise have been acceptable; it was this that reconciled persons of simple piety and little cultivated understanding. Many who might follow him with very imperfect apprehension and satisfaction through the preceding parts, could *reckon* on being warmly interested at the latter end. In that part his utterance acquired a remarkable change of intonation, expressive of his own excited feelings.

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of a perfect conception and expression of every thought, however rapid the succession. There were no half-formed ideas, no misty semblances of a meaning, no momentary lapses of intellect into an utterance at hazard, no sentences without a distinct object, and serving merely for the continuity of speaking; every sentiment had at once a palpable shape, and an appropriateness to the immediate purpose. If now and then, which was seldom, a word, or a part of a sentence, slightly failed to denote precisely the thing he intended, it was curious to observe how perfectly he was aware of it, and how he would instantly throw in an additional clause, which did signify it precisely. Another thing for curious observation was, that sometimes, in the middle of a sentence, or just as it came to an end, there would suddenly occur to him some required point of discrimination, some exception perhaps, or limitation, to the assertion he was in the act of making; or at another time, a circumstance of reinforcement extraneously suggested, a transient ray, as it were, from a foreign and distant object; and then he would, at the prompting of the moment, intimate the qualifying reference in a brief parenthesis in the sentence, or by a reverting glance at the end of it.—In these last lines of the description, I have in view the more closely intellectual parts of his public exercises, the parts employed in the ascertainment and elucidation of truth. There will be occasion, toward the close of these notices, to attribute some defect of discrimination and caution to other parts or qualities of his sermons.

It were superfluous to say, that Mr. Hall's powerful reasoning faculty, and his love and habit of reasoning, went into his preaching; but I may be allowed to observe, that the argumentative tenour thence prevailing through it, was of a somewhat different modification from the reasoning process exhibited in the composition of some of the most distinguished sermon-writers. To say that he had much, very much, of the essence and effect of reasoning without its forms, will perhaps be considered as unqualified praise. Certainly we have a good riddance in the obsoleteness of the cumbrous and barbarous technicalities of logic, in use among schoolmen, and of which traces remain in the works of some of our old divines, especially of the polemic class. But, divested of every sort of technicality, a natural and easy logic (easy, I mean, for the hearers' or readers'

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apprehension) may pervade a discourse in such manner, that it shall evidently have more of the consistence of a contexture than of an accumulation. The train of thinking may preserve a link of connexion by the dependence of the following thought on the foregoing; that succeeding thought not only being just in itself, and pertinent to the matter in hand, but being so still more specially in virtue of resulting, by obvious deduction, or necessary continuation, from the preceding; thus at once giving and receiving force by the connexion. It is of great advantage for the strength of a discourse, when it is so conceived as to require the not unfrequent recurrence of the signs, "for," "because," "if—then," "consequently," "so that," and the other familiar logical marks of conjunction and dependence in the series of ideas.

This will not be mistaken to mean any thing like a long uninterrupted process, as in a mathematical demonstration carried on in a rigorous strictness of method, and with a dependence of the validity of some one final result on the correctness of each and every movement in the long operation. No lengthened courses of deduction are required or admissible in popular instruction; the discourse must, at no distant intervals, come to pauses and changes, introducing matters of argument and illustration which are chosen by the preacher for their general pertinence and effectiveness to the subject, rather than by any strict logical rule of continuity; and he is not required to answer a captious question of a disciple of the schools whether this topic, and this again, be in the most exact line of sequence with the foregoing. It is sufficient that there be an obvious *general* relation, connecting the successive portions of the discourse; so that each in the succession shall take along with it the substantial effect of the preceding. But through the extent of each of these portions, the course of thinking might be conducted in a certain order of consecutive dependence, which should make the thoughts not merely to coincide, but to verify and authenticate one another while they coincide, in bearing on the proposed object. And such a mode of working them into evidence and application, would give them a closer grapple on the mind.

There will be testimony to this from the experience of readers conversant with the best examples; for instance, the sermons of South, which, glaringly censurable as many of them are on very grave accounts, are admirable for this linked succession, this passing to a further idea by *consequence* from the preceding,

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and not merely by that principle of relation between them, that they both tend to the same effect. Yet, at the same time, so far is he from exhibiting a cold dry argument, like Clarke in his sermons, that his ratiocination is abundantly charged with what may be called the matter of passion; often indeed malicious and fierce, sometimes solemnly impressive; at all events serving to show, that strong argument may be worked in fire as well as in frost.* It has always appeared to me, that Mr. Hall's discourses would have had one more ingredient of excellence, if the rich and strong production of thought, while pressing, as it always did, with an united impulse toward the point in view, had been drawn out in a sequence of more express and palpable dependence and concatenation. The conjunction of the ideas would sometimes appear to be rather that of contiguity than of implication. The successive sentences would come like separate independent dictates of intellect, the absence of some of which would indeed have been a loss to the general force, but not a breach of connexion. It must be observed, however, that when special occasions required it, he would bring into exercise the most severe logic in the most explicit form. Many fine examples of this are found in his controversy on Terms of Communion. And such would, at times, occur in his sermons.

Every cultivated hearer must have been struck with admiration of the preacher's mastery of language, a refractory servant to many who have made no small efforts to command it. I know not whether he sometimes painfully felt its deficiency and untowardness for his purpose; but it *seemed* to answer all his requirements, whether for cutting nice discriminations, or presenting abstractions in a tangible form, or investing grand subjects with splendour, or imparting a pathetic tone to expostulation, or inflaming the force of invective, or treating common topics without the insipidity of common-place diction. His language in the pulpit was hardly ever colloquial, but neither was it of an artificial cast. It was generally as little *bookish* as might consist with an uniformly sustained and serious style. Now and then there would be a scholastic term, beyond the

* Among others, I might name Stillingfleet's sermons, as exemplifying this manner of connexion in the series of ideas. If reference were made to ancient eloquence, Demosthenes would be cited as the transcendent example of this excellence.

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popular understanding, so familiar to himself, from his study of philosophers and old divines, as to be the first word occurring to him in his rapid delivery. Some conventional phrases which he was in the habit of using, (for instance, "to usher in," "to give birth to," &c.) might better have been exchanged for plain unfigurative verbs. His language in preaching, as in conversation, was in one considerable point better than in his well-known and elaborately composed sermons, in being more natural and flexible. When he set in reluctantly upon that operose employment, his style was apt to assume a certain processional stateliness of march, a rhetorical rounding of periods, a too frequent inversion of the natural order of the sentence, with a morbid dread of degrading it to end in a particle or other small-looking word; a structure in which I doubt whether the augmented appearance of strength and dignity be a compensation for the sacrifice of a natural, living, and variable freedom of composition. A remarkable difference will be perceived between the highly-wrought sermons long since published, and the short ones now printed, which were written without a thought of the press; a difference to the advantage of the latter in the grace of simplicity. Both in his conversation and his public speaking, there was often, besides and beyond the merit of clearness, precision, and brevity, a certain felicity of diction; something which, had it not been common in his discourse, would have appeared the special *good luck* of falling without care of selection on the aptest words, cast in elegant combination, and producing an effect of beauty even when there was nothing expressly ornamental.

From the pleasure there is in causing and feeling surprise by the exaggeration of what *is* extraordinary into something absolutely marvellous, persons of Mr. Hall's acquaintance, especially in his earlier life, have taken great license of fiction in stories of his extemporaneous eloquence. It was not uncommon to have an admired sermon asserted to have been thrown off in an emergency on the strength of an hour's previous study. This matter has been set right in Dr. Gregory's curious and interesting note (prefixed to Vol. I.) describing the preacher's usual manner of preparation; and showing that it was generally made with deliberate care.* But whatever proportion of the discourse

* Once, in a conversation with a few friends who had led him to talk of his preaching, and to answer, among other questions, one respecting this supposed

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was from premeditation, the hearer could not distinguish that from what was extemporaneous. There were no periods betraying, by a mechanical utterance, a mere recitation. Every sentence had so much the spirit and significance of present immediate thinking, as to prove it a living dictate of the speaker's mind, whether it came in the way of recollection, or in the fresh production of the moment. And in most of his sermons, the more animated ones especially, a very large proportion of what he spoke must have been of this immediate origination; it was impossible that less than this should be the effect of the excited state of a mind so powerful in thinking, so extremely prompt in the use of that power, and in possession of such copious materials.

Some of his discourses were of a calm temperament nearly throughout; even these, however, never failing to end with a pressing enforcement of the subject. But in a considerable portion of them (a large one, it is said, during all but a late period of his life) he warmed into emotion before he had advanced through what might be called the discussion. The intellectual process, the explications, arguments, and exemplifications, would then be animated, without being confused, obscured, or too much dilated, by that more vital element which we denominate sentiment; while striking figures, at intervals, emitted a momentary brightness; so that the understanding, the passions, and the imagination of the hearers, were all at once brought under command, by a combination of the forces adapted to seize possession of each. The spirit of such discourses would grow into intense fervour, even before they approached the conclusion.

In the most admired of his sermons, and invariably in all his preaching, there was one excellence, of a moral kind, in which few eloquent preachers have ever equalled, and none ever did or will surpass him. It was so remarkable and obvious, that the reader (if having been also a hearer of Mr. Hall) will have gone before me when I name—oblivion of self. The preacher appeared wholly absorbed in his subject, given up to its possession,

and reported extemporaneous production of the most striking parts of his sermons in the early period of his ministry, he surprised us by saying, that most of them, so far from being extemporaneous, had been so deliberately prepared that the words were selected, and the construction and order of the sentences adjusted.

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as the single actuating principle and impulse of the mental achievement which he was as if unconsciously performing:—*as if* unconsciously; for it is impossible it could be literally so; yet his absorption was so evident, there was so clear an absence of every betraying sign of vanity, as to leave no doubt that reflection on himself, the tacit thought, 'It is I that am displaying this excellence of speech,' was the faintest action of his mind. His auditory were sure that it was as in relation to his subject, and not to himself, that he regarded the feelings with which they might hear him.

What a contrast to divers showy and admired orators, whom the reader will remember to have seen in the pulpit and elsewhere! For who has not witnessed, perhaps more times than a few, a pulpit exhibition, which unwittingly told that the speaker was to be himself as prominent, at the least, as his sacred theme? Who has not observed the glimmer of a self-complacent smile, partly reflected, as it were, on his visage, from the plausive visages confronting him, and partly lighted from within, by the blandishment of a still warmer admirer? Who has not seen him swelling with a tone and air of conscious importance in some specially *fine* passage; prolonging it, holding it up, spreading out another and yet another scarlet fold, with at last a temporary stop to survey the assembly, as challenging their tributary looks of admiration, radiating on himself, or interchanged among sympathetic individuals in the congregation? Such a preacher might have done well to become a hearer for a while;—if indeed capable of receiving any corrective instruction from an example of his reverse; for there have been instances of preachers actually spoiling themselves still worse in consequence of hearing some of Mr. Hall's eloquent effusions; assuming, beyond their previous sufficiency of such graces, a vociferous declamation, a forced look of force, and a tumour of verbiage, from unaccountable failure to perceive, or to make a right use of the perception, that his sometimes impetuous delivery, ardent aspect, and occasionally magnificent diction, were all purely spontaneous from the strong excitement of the subject.

Under that excitement, when it was the greatest, he did unconsciously acquire a corresponding elation of attitude and expression; would turn, though not with frequent change, toward the different parts of the assembly, and, as almost his only peculiarity of action, would make one step back from his

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position (which, however, was instantly resumed) at the last word of a climax; an action which inevitably suggested the idea of the recoil of heavy ordnance.* I mention so inconsiderable a circumstance, because I think it has somewhere lately been noticed with a hinted imputation of vanity. But to the feeling of his constant hearers, the cool and hypercritical equally with the rest, it was merely one of those effects which emotion always produces in the exterior in one mode or another, and was accidentally become associated with the rising of his excitement to its highest pitch, just at the sentence which decisively clenched an argument, or gave the last strongest emphasis to an enforcement. This action never occurred, but when there *was* a special emphasis in what he said.

Thus the entire possession and actuation of his mind by his subject, evident in every way, was especially so by two signs: First; that his delivery was simply and unconsciously governed by his mind. When it was particularly animated, or solemn, or pathetic, or indignant, it was such, not by rule, intention, or any thought of rhetorical fitness; but in involuntary accordance with the strain of the thought and feeling. In this sense, he "spake as he was moved:" and consequently nothing in his manner of delivery was either out of the right place, or *in* it by studied adjustment.†

The other indication of being totally surrendered to the subject, and borne on by its impetus when the current became strong, was (in perfect contrast to what is described above) the

* In sermons plainly and almost exclusively exegetical, or in which bodily disorder repressed his characteristic energy, he would often keep nearly one posture, looking straight forward, during the whole service. At all times, his gesture was clear of every trace of art and intention. Indeed he had scarcely any thing of what is meant by gesticulation or action in the schools of oratory. It was what he never thought of for himself, and he despised its artificial exhibition in others, at least in preachers.

† I remember, at the distance of many years, with what a vivid feeling of the ludicrous he related an anecdote of a preacher, long since deceased, of some account in his day and connexion. He would, in preaching, sometimes weep, or seem to weep, when the people wondered why, as not perceiving in what he was saying any cause for such emotion, in the exact places where it occurred. After his death, one of his hearers, happening to inspect some of his manuscript sermons, exclaimed, "I have found the explanation; we used to wonder at the good Doctor's weeping with so little reason sometimes, as it seemed. In his sermons, there is written here and there in the margins, 'Cry here;' now I verily believe the Doctor sometimes mistook the place, and that was the cause of what appeared so unaccountable."

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rapid passing by, and passing away, of any striking sentiment or splendid image. He never detained it in view by reduplications and amplifying phrases, as if he would not let it vanish so soon; as if he were enamoured of it, and wanted his hearers to be so for his sake; as if he wished to stand a while conspicuous by its lustre upon him. It glistened or flashed a moment and was gone.

The shining points were the more readily thus hastened away, as they intimately belonged to that which was passing. They occurred not as of arbitrary insertion, but with the appropriateness of a natural relation. However unexpectedly any brilliant idea might present itself, its impression was true and immediate to the purpose. Instead of arresting and diverting the attention to itself, as a thing standing out, to be separately admired for its own sake, it fell congenially into the train, and augmented without disturbing the effect. The fine passage would, indeed, in many instances, admit of being taken apart, and would in a detached state retain much of its beauty: but its greatest virtue was in animating the whole combination of sentiments. Mr. Hall's imagination always acted in direct subservience to his intellectual design.

A seriousness of spirit and manner, was an invariable characteristic of his preaching, whatever were the topic, or occasion, or place, or preceding social intercourse, or temporary mood of his feelings. As his conversation often abounded with wit, in the strictest sense of the term, with the accompaniment of humour, both frequently playing into satire (in which he was not a little formidable), it has been justly wondered that nothing of this kind appeared in his sermons. I now wish I had ventured to ask him how this happened; whether it was that he had determined, on principle, to forbid himself all strokes and sparkles of that amusing faculty, as in every case detrimental to the effect of preaching; or that no witty turns or fancies did really ever occur to him during that exercise. However the case might be, all the repeaters of his witty vivacities and severities have forborne, as far as I ever heard, to report any one of them as a sentence of a sermon. No more than a single instance is within my own recollection of any thing devious on this side from his accustomed tenour; it was a most biting sarcasm at the hypocritical cant of those wealthy persons who pretend a concern for the promotion of the

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christian cause, but, under the affectation of a pious trust in Providence for that promotion, take good care to hold fast all but some parsimonious driblets of their money.

The absorbing seizure of his faculties by his subject, when it was prosecuted at uninterrupted length, carried him sometimes, I suspected, into a peculiar and extraordinary state of mind for a public speaker. It appeared to me not unfrequently that his ideas pressed into his view so much in the character of living realities, that he lost all distinct sense of the presence of the congregation; so that he had for a while no more than a general and almost unconscious recognition of them as listening to him. His look at such times was that of a person so withdrawn to something within, that he is evidently taking no notice of what his eyes appear to fall upon. In confirmation that the case was so, I remember instances in which, being asked, after the service, whether he had not been grievously annoyed by an almost incessant and most thoughtlessly unrepressed coughing in many parts of the congregation, with other offensive and more voluntary noises, which had destroyed a third part at the least of his sentences for the hearing of a great proportion of the assembly, he said he had not been at all aware there was any such annoyance. It needs not to be observed, to those who have heard him, how necessary it was rendered by the defect of clear strong sound in his voice, when not forcibly exerted, that no other sounds should interfere.

At other times, however, he was in every sense present to his auditory, and spoke to them in pointed address; especially when a hortatory application at the end made them all feel that he was earnestly desirous to instruct, impress, and persuade.—I may have occasion to advert again, with a somewhat different reference, to the circumstance of his mental abstraction.

It has been observed that he had the command of ample and various resources for illustration and proof. The departments from which he drew the least might be, the facts and philosophy of the material world. His studies had been directed with a strong and habitual preference to the regions of abstraction and metaphysics. And he furnished a fine example of the advantage which may be derived from such studies to the faculty for theological and moral discussions, by a mind at the same time too full of ardour, sentiment, and piety, to be cooled and dried into an indifference to every thing but the most disembodied

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and attenuated speculation. The advantage, as exemplified by him, of the practice and discipline of dealing with truth in the abstract, where a severe attention is required to apprehend it as a real subsistence, to see and grasp it, if I may so speak, in tangible forms, might be noted as twofold. First, (that which has been anticipated in former remarks,) the utmost precision in every thing he uttered. He could express each dictate of thought in perfect freedom from doubt whether it might not be equivocal; whether it might not be of loose import and vague direction, instead of strictly to the point; whether it might not involve some latent inconsistency within itself or in its immediate conjunction with another idea; whether it were exactly the very thing he intended. It was of complete formation in his understanding; it had its including line and limit, instead of being confused with something else. As it was once happily said by himself of Johnson, "he shone strongly on the angles of a thought." The consequence of his rigorous habits of thinking thus came with eminent value into discourse addressed and intelligible to ordinary good sense, where there was no obvious intervention of that refined speculation which was nevertheless contributing, in effect, so much to the clearness and strength of its consistence. What was of philosophic quality in its most immediate agency, became a popular excellence in its result.

But secondly: besides the distinctness and precision of all the particulars of thought in detail, that exercise of abstract speculation had brought him into possession and mastery of those general principles, in virtue of which these particular sentiments must have their authority. It is not at all necessary in any ordinary course of instruction, to be continually tracing the particular back, for its verification, to the general; but it is a great advantage to be able to do so when it *is* necessary, as it sometimes will be. He could do this; he knew from what original truths could be deduced the varieties of sentiment which the speaker utters in unqualified assertion, as not liable to be questioned. Any of them, not self-evident, he could have abstracted into a proximate principle in a generalization, and that again resting on a still deeper or ultimate one. He had seen down to the basis, and therefore was confident of the firmness of what he stood upon; unlike a man who is treading on a surface which he perceives or suspects to be hollow, and is

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ignorant and fearful of what there may be underneath. Or, to change the figure, he could trace the minor outermost ramifications of truth downward into the larger stems; and those larger into the main trunk and the root. This conscious ability of the preacher, or any other discourser, to sustain upon first principles what he is advancing with the freedom of unhesitating assertion and assumption, will impart a habitual assurance of safety while he is expatiating thus in what may be called the outward, free, and popular exposition of his subject.

It is presumed that this representation of the use he made, in sermons, of his power and habits of abstract speculation, may suffice to prevent a notion, in the minds of any of our readers who may seldom or never have heard him, that he was in a specific sense a philosophical or metaphysical preacher. He did often indeed (and it was a distinguishing excellence equally of his talking, preaching, and writing) point to some general principle, and briefly and plainly shew how it authorized an opinion. Occasionally, in a more than usually argumentative discourse, he would draw out a more extended deduction. He would also cite from the doctrines of philosophy, with lucid application, some law of the human mind (for instance, and especially, that of association). But still it was far more a *virtual* than a formal result of his abstruser studies that pervaded his preaching.

His intimate acquaintance with many of the greatest authors, whom he had studied with a sentiment of reverence, and whose intellectual and religious wealth was largely drawn into his own capacious faculties, contributed to preclude an ostentation of originality. His sermons would make, on cultivated hearers, a general impression of something new, in the sense of being very different, by eminent superiority, from any common character of preaching; but the novelty would appear less to consist in absolute origination, than in the admirable power of selection and combination. It was not exhibited in a frequency of singularly bold prominent inventions, in the manner of the new mountains and islands sometimes suddenly thrown up on tracts of the globe; but rather in that whole construction of the performance by which the most appropriate topics, from whatever quarter, were brought into one array, were made imposing by aggregation, strong by unity of purpose, and often bright by felicitous apposition; in short, were so plastically

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ordered as to assume much of the character of a creation. It is probable that if his studies had been of slighter tenour, if his reading had been less, or more desultory, if his faculties had been suffered to run more loose, his discourses would have more abounded with ideas starting out, as it were singly, with an aspect like nothing ever seen before. His mental ground was cultivated too industriously and regularly for substantial produce, to leave room for those often beautiful wild-flowers, which spring spontaneously in a fertile half-wrought soil. His avowed indifference to poetry might be taken as one indication of a mind more adapted to converse with the substantialities of truth, than to raise phantoms of invention. Perhaps the most striking feature of his originality was seen in his talent (like the chemistry which brings a latent power into manifestation and action) of drawing from some admitted principle a hitherto unthought-of inference, which affects the whole argument of a question, and leads to a conclusion either new or by a new road.

While he availed himself in his sermons of the powers and means of reason, he constantly referred, I believe with an increased explicitness in the more advanced periods of his ministry, to Revelation as the supreme and final authority. No preacher, or writer on subjects of divinity, was ever more faithful to the principle that all doctrines professing to be christian, must, both in their statement and proof, be founded on the Scriptures, whatever further light or corroboration they may admit from independent reason, or from matter of fact. It is understood that it cost him, at an early season of his life, a great effort, with respect to some particular opinions, to subdue his speculative disposition to such an uncompromising submission to that authority, as to renounce not only the presumptions which place themselves in contravention to the Scriptures, but all the expedients of a forced or evasive interpretation of them. But the submission became absolute and perpetual. And in this spirit he maintained through life so assiduous a practice of studying the Bible, that he acquired a remarkable facility for citing from every part of it, in the course of his preaching, the passages most pertinent for evidence or enforcement of whatever he was advancing. It would often strike the hearers that probably no texts could have been found in the whole book more exactly to the purpose. Though he studied the Scriptures critically, he was sparing of learned criticism in the

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pulpit; never resorted to it but when he saw a question of some importance involved in a right or wrong construction or interpretation; and then with the greatest possible brevity. In some few of the instances he might seem to rest too much of the weight of an argument on the acceptation of a single insulated expression; for he was not, from his ability to bring a copious induction of texts in proof of a doctrine, the less tenacious of any and every one which he thought could be vindicated for an assertion or implication of it by a correct interpretation.

In his choice of subjects, a prevailing desire to do good directed him most frequently to those, or to select parts and views of those, that present themselves as of chief importance on the common field of christianity. When he took what appeared an insulated subject, of a peculiar and perhaps somewhat curious cast, he would seldom fail, while illustrating it in a manner appropriate to itself, to bring it at last, and by an unforced incidence, to coalesce with or merge in some grand generality or cardinal doctrine of christian faith. This method contributed to maintain a consistency in the doctrine and tendency of his diversified ministrations.

He insisted with the utmost emphasis on the principle that christianity, instead of being merely a circumstantial modification, or clearer exposition, or augmented sanction, or supplemental adjunct of religion conceived as in its original subsistence in the relation between the Creator and a race not involved in moral evil, is an absolutely distinct and peculiar economy, appointed for a race that *is* in that disastrous condition, and constituted upon the essentially altered relation, the relation between man as a depraved guilty being and his Maker. In his judgment any theory which does not acknowledge christianity in this express character, positively rejects it; with the guilt, to him who dares this rejection, of insulting the Almighty, and the calamity of being self-doomed to meet the righteous Judge on an interdicted ground, a fatal ground, therefore, where justice will be apart from mercy. From his conviction of the importance of this principle of the peculiarity of the christian economy, he brought continually in view the doctrines which *constitute* its peculiarity. The scheme of mediation; the Mediator's character, in the various views and lights in which it can be displayed, of dignity and humiliation, of majesty

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and benignity; his vicarious sacrifice for the atonement of sin; were the subjects of his very marked and habitual preference. On the last of them he enlarged in such extent and frequency, that, with the same perfect conviction as himself of its vital and transcendent importance, I sometimes thought there was hardly a due proportion yielded to the correlative subjects—to that extent and peremptoriness of the requirements of the divine law, that condition of the human nature, that actual existence and stupendous amount of guilt, which are the *cause* that there is a *necessity* for an atonement.

His practice, just noticed, of prosecuting the discussion of particular subjects, while in a manner strictly appropriate to each as a separate theme, yet also with a bearing toward an ultimate combination with some essential principle of christianity, conduced to keep almost constantly in view the evangelical principles, those which are peculiarly characteristic of the mediatorial economy; for these were very commonly the points to which the various courses of thought running through his different sermons were made to tend, and where they fell in confluence.

His system of theological tenets (*creed* is an ill-favoured term) was strictly orthodox, on the model of what has come to be denominated Moderate Calvinism. With the other conspicuous points, the doctrine of the Trinity,* the divinity of Christ, the atonement, and justification by faith alone, he held the more distinctively Calvinistic doctrine of predestination; though I cannot answer for the precise terms in which he would have stated it; but I presume he would have accepted those employed in the articles of the Church of England. In preaching he very rarely made any express reference to that doctrine; and his recognition of it by implication was too indistinct for toleration from the rigidly Calvinistic hearers of any preacher not privileged by talents and public favour to bear down all censorial pretensions.

Under our total ignorance of divine decrees, our ignorance of all but the *general* purpose of the Almighty in the promulgation of the gospel, he considered that men are to be addressed as

* An exception is to be made in this article for an opinion at one time held by him, and, in one of his letters, I think, named by him *Dualism*, but surrendered long before the decline of his life. That opinion was, that the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as a divine energy, or agency, instead of a personal subsistence.

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rational beings, on subjects of which, unless they will practically renounce that property of their nature, they must apprehend the vast importance; subjects which, as well as appealing to their coolest reason, ought to be of mighty force to press on the conscience and the passions; to which it were, consequently, the last absurdity to decline summoning that reason, and arousing those passions. He was therefore exempt from all those restrictions, in respect to the mode of presenting and urging the overtures of redemption, which have been imposed on some good men of the Calvinistic faith by a concern for systematic consistency. He took the utmost liberty in his strain of inculcation; exhorting, inviting, entreating, expostulating, remonstrating; in language of nearly the same tenour as that which might be employed by an Arminian preacher; with the exception, of course, of that notion of free-will, which recurs with such laborious iteration in the preaching of that order, and which was excluded from his faith equally by theological and philosophical reasons. This non-advertence in his sermons to the Calvinistic tenet, was not from any secret consciousness that the belief of it is essentially incongruous with his free strain of inculcation; it was not that he might enjoy a license for inconsistency through the device of keeping one of two incompatible things out of sight; but he judged that neither the doctrine itself, nor the process of reasoning to prove the belief of it consistent with the most unrestricted language of exhortation, could be made a profitable part of popular instruction. He deemed it authority enough for his practice, independently of all abstracted reasoning on the subject, that he had the example of the divinely inspired preachers urging the demands of the gospel on the unbelievers and the wicked, in the most unmeasured terms of exhortation, the predestinating decrees of heaven set out of the question; and that in modern experience it is a notorious fact, that those preachers of the Calvinistic school (for one memorable example, Whitfield) who have nevertheless availed themselves of this freedom to the utmost extent, have been incomparably more successful in effecting the great object of preaching, than those who have, somewhat presumptuously, charged themselves with so much responsibility respecting the unknown determination of the Almighty, that they must not call men to faith and repentance lest they should contravene his sovereign purposes.

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Perhaps it would not have been expected from Mr. Hall's great capacity, that he should be habitually indisposed to dwell or expatiate long near the borders of the remoter, darker tracts, of the regions of religious contemplation. Such, however, appears to have been the fact. If the cause were inquired, undoubtedly one thing that withheld or withdrew him was, a consideration of usefulness, a preference for what was most adapted to be beneficial to his own religious discipline and to the best interests of others. He was amply informed and warned, by his knowledge of the history of philosophy and theology, of the mischiefs of a restless, presumptuous, interminable speculation, a projection of thought, beyond the limits of ascertainable truth. But there was a cause more radical in his mental constitution. That constitution was not predominantly either imaginative or contemplative; it was *intellectual*, in the strictest sense; in the (perhaps arbitrary) sense, that the matter of his speculations must be what he could distinctly understand, what he could survey in such form and order as to admit of propositions and reasons; so that the speculative process lost its interest with him if carried into a direction, or if exceeding the limit, where it could no longer be subjected to the methods of proof; in other words, where it ceased to comprehend and reason, and turned into conjecture, sentiment, and fancy. He seemed to have no ambition to stretch out his intellectual domain to an extent which he could not occupy and traverse, with some certainty of his movements and measurements. His sphere was very wide, expanded to one circle beyond another, at each of which in succession he left many other men behind him, arrested by their respective limits; but he was willing to perceive, and even desirous to verify, his own ultimate boundary; and when he came to the line where it was signified to him, "Thus far, and no further," he stopped, with apparently much less of an impulse than might have been expected in so strong a spirit, to seek an outlet, and attempt an irruption into the dubious territory beyond.

With a mind so constituted and governed, he was less given than many other men of genius have been to those visionary modes of thought; those musings exempt from all regulation; that impatience of aspiration to reach the vast and remote; that fascination of the mysterious, captivating by the very circumstance of eluding; that fearful adventuring on the dark, the

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unknown, the awful; "those thoughts that wander through eternity," which have often been at once the luxury and the pain of imaginative and highly endowed spirits, discontented with their assigned lot in this tenebrious world. No doubt, in his case, piety would have interfered to restrain such impatience of curiosity, or audacity of ambitious thinking, or indignant strife against the confines of our present allotment, as would have risen to a spirit of insubordination to the divine appointment. And possibly there were times when this interference was required; but still the structure of his faculties, and the manner of employing them to which it determined him, contributed much to exempt him from that passion to go beyond the mortal sphere which would irreligiously murmur at the limitation. His acquiescence did not seem at least to cost him a strong effort of repression.

This distinction of his intellectual character was obvious in his preaching. He was eminently successful on subjects of an elevated order, which he would expand and illustrate in a manner which sustained them to the high level of their dignity. This carried him near some point of the border of that awful darkness which encompasses, on all sides, our little glimmering field of knowledge; and then it might be seen how aware he was of his approach, how cautiously, or shall I say instinctively, he was held aloof, how sure not to abandon the ground of evidence, by a hazardous incursion of conjecture or imagination into the unknown. He would indicate how near, and in what direction, lay the shaded frontier; but dared not, did not seem even tempted, to invade its "majesty of darkness."

This procedure, in whatever proportion owing to his intellectual temperament or to the ascendency of religion, will be pronounced wise for a *general* practice. If, however, he could have allowed himself in some degree of exception, it would have been gratifying to a portion of his hearers. There are certain mysterious phenomena in the moral economy of our world, which compel, and will not release, the attention of a thoughtful mind, especially if of a gloomy constitutional tendency. Wherever it turns, it still encounters their portentous aspect; often feels arrested and fixed by them as under some potent spell; making an effort, still renewed and still unavailing, to escape from the appalling presence of the vision. Now it was conceived, that a strenuous deliberate exertion of a power

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of thought like his, after he had been so deeply conversant with important and difficult speculations, might perhaps have contributed something to alleviate this oppression. Not, of course, that it should be dreamed that his, or any still stronger human intelligence, should be able to penetrate with light the black clouds which overshadow our system. But it was imagined possible for such force of reason to impart somewhat of an extenuating quality to the *medium* through which they are beheld, and through which they might then be beheld with a less painful and total prostration of spirit. It might have been an invaluable service, it was thought, if his whole strength and resources had been applied to display comprehensively the nature, the extent, the solidity, of the ground on which faith may rest with a firm confidence in the goodness of the sovereign Governor, notwithstanding all the strange and awful phenomena of our economy.*

This disinclination to adventure into the twilight of speculation was shown in respect to subjects of less formidable mystery, of solemn indeed, but rather attractive than over-awing character. For instance, the mode, the condition, of that conscious existence after death, of which, as a fact, he was so zealous an assertor against the dreary dogma which consigns the soul to insensibility in the separate state; if indeed it *be* any existent state of an intelligence when all we know of its attributes is abolished. It would have been gratifying, and might have been beneficial for serious impression, to see some gleams of his vigorous thought thrown upon the border of that scene of our destiny, so obscure, but at the same time so near, and of transcendent interest; to see the reserved and scattered intimations of the sacred oracles brought into combination, and attempted to be reduced to something approaching to the form of a theory; to see how far any conjectural imaginations could be accompanied by reasons from analogy, and any other principle of probability; with a citation, perhaps, of certain of the least

* It may be mentioned, in further explanation of the indisposition noted above, that in spite of the long and often severe persecution of bodily pain, his temperament was cheerful and buoyant. He had a remarkable facility of finding or making sources and occasions of pleasurable feeling, and averting his mind from gloomy subjects; insomuch that he appeared to be, even on the mere strength of this temperament, much less subject than might have been expected of so enlarged a capacity of thought, to be invaded by the dark and fearful forms which those subjects can assume.

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arbitrary and fanciful of the visions of other inquisitive speculators, commented on as he would have commented. But he did not appear to partake of the intense curiosity with which the inquiries and poetical musings of some pious men have been carried into the subject. He seemed, beyond what might have been expected in relation to a matter which lies across the whole breadth of our prospect, and so closely at hand, content to let it remain a *terra incognita* till the hour that puts an end to conjecture. It will be understood that this is mentioned, not with any meaning of animadversion, but as exemplifying that peculiarity of his mental character by which he appeared disinclined to pursue any inquiries beyond the point where substantial evidence fails. The regret of some of his hearers was, that he should not oftener be willing to exert his whole strength to try whether that point be really fixed where it appears and is assumed to be. They would have been gratified to see him undertaking sometimes the discussion of subjects, which they would have deprecated any attempt upon by men of ordinary ability. While so superior a mental engine, if I may be allowed the expression, was in their hands, they wished they could *make the most* of its powers.

I have deferred to the last, some additional observations, which I shall attempt with considerable difficulty; partly from a doubt whether I may be able to render them plainly intelligible; and partly from apprehension that they may not please some of those who most admired Mr. Hall, of whose talents, however, no man's admiration was higher than mine.

The general purport of what I would say is this, that while his preaching was superlatively excellent in many of its qualities, it was not, from a defect in certain important ones, the best adapted for salutary efficacy. A short indication of what I would allege would be, that it was too general and theoretic; that it presented things too much in unbroken breadth and mass; that it was apt to exceed, in the most eloquent parts, the allowed license of exaggeration; that it was not kept in due relation to the realities of life; that while it was most excellent in the discrimination of topics, sentiments, arguments, it did not discriminate and individualize human characters; that therefore it did not maintain an intimate commerce with the actual condition of the hearers.

It were superfluous to repeat how pre-eminently he displayed,

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in the perspicuous and convincing statement, development, and confirmation of truth, the primary excellence of preaching, as it is of all instruction; or how earnestly the practical interest of the doctrine was often enforced toward the conclusion of his sermons. The defect, which, nevertheless, I am wishing to mark as not excluded by such rare merit, was, that (as a general fact, and with exceptions) his preaching did not bring and keep the people under a closely *disciplinary* process. It allowed them too much of the privilege of the spectators of a fine and well ordered series of representation, of such a nature, that they can look on at ease from any similar disturbance to that of the king in Hamlet, at sight of the acted garden-scene.

A consideration of the whole design of preaching might suggest something approaching to a model of what would seem the most probably calculated to attain its several ends, in combination to one grand purpose. We may regard the preacher as holding a kind of comprehensive jurisdiction over the spiritual and moral condition of the congregation, who are a mingled assemblage of all varieties of that condition. Should not, then, the best mode of ministration, for beneficial effect, be that which applies itself to this condition, not only either generally in the mass, or as viewed in the two divisions of religious and irreligious, but also with a special recognition of those varieties?

I need not here say so self-evident a thing as that the *generalities* of religion should be often presented; that the christian doctrines should be stated and illustrated; that, in a word, the *theory* of christianity, as a whole, and in its principal branches, should be kept conspicuous in the people's view. But while justice is done to the subjects of general consideration in religion, what a large account there is of more particular matters, on which, and on each of which, it is most important to call men's reason and conscience into exercise. There are the various causes, distinguishable and assignable ones, which frustrate the exhibition of religious truth, and may be so commented on as to shew *how* they frustrate it. There is the sad catalogue of the perversities and deceits of the heart; there are the distortions and presumptions of prejudice; the principles which, in disguised form perhaps, and afraid of audacious avowal, but of malignant essence, react against the divine authority; the subterfuges of insincerity; the various ways in which men evade conviction, falsify in effect the truth to which they assent in

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terms, or delude themselves in their estimates of their own spirit and conduct. There is the estrangement from reflection, the extreme reluctance to honest self-examination. There is also, in the majority of any large congregation, many of those who make a direct profession of personal religion not excepted, an indistinct apprehension, and a lax application, of the principles and rules of christian morality. These last, together with the state of men's notions and habits in relation to them, are within the province of the religious instructor; unless the universally, cogently, and even minutely preceptive character of revelation be a grand impertinence.

It is of the utmost importance that things like these should occupy a large space in the ministration. They claim to be made the subject of the preacher's best exertion, to show what they are, by illustrations verified upon the actual state of human beings, and how they interfere with religion in all its doctrines and applications. There is not one of those here noted (and many more might be specified) that would not be, apart, a matter of the most useful discussion for the longest sermon. And if this be true, the majority of the evangelical teachers of our congregations seem very far from being aware (in respect especially to what belongs to the moral department of the great christian school) of the extent of either the resources or the duties of their office.

But besides the propriety of discoursing on such things formally and at large, there is a valuable use to be made of them in a secondary and more incidental way, by adverting to them, any of them, as the case may require, in short and pointed reference, when any lesson of the religious discipline can by means of them be more strongly fastened on men's minds; on minds which will play loose from its hold if such expedients be not employed to strike and grasp them. Through whatever subject (except the most exclusively speculative) the christian instructor can direct his course, considerations relating to such matters are, some or other of them, near at hand, to admonish him of something which, if he do not take account of it, will keep him off from obtaining possession of the inner man. And therefore it would be well that, instead of passing by these considerations unnoticed, and prosecuting with exclusive attention the pure *rationale* of his subject, he should admit them to interfere with his progress, should implicate

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such of them as come most immediately on his track with the train of his observations; sometimes with a short interruption and suspension of that train, in order to take in and insist on an accessory consideration which may turn the subject with a more special pointedness on the hearers than would be done by its strictly regular prosecution. He might thus, without losing sight of the *general* objects of his discourse, give it a particularity, a pressure at critical points, a distinctness of arrest on the attention and conscience.

Now Mr. Hall had, both by the cast of his mind and his addiction to prolonged speculative studies, an inaptitude to such a manner of preaching. His subject took the form of an intellectual theme, homogeneous, continuous, and nowhere allowing a diversion from its order, or a breaking up among its topics to turn any of them for a few moments to a peculiar and insulated use; or admitting the intervention of any thing which would bring the progress to a stand. The channel of his thoughts was so straight on, and the current so full and rapid, that there could be no refluxes and eddies. He entered on his subject with a clear prospect over it to the end; the interest, to himself, of his movement in prosecution of it, was in throwing his mind still forward on the next succeeding part, with a propulsion augmented by each as he passed through it; and he would have been impatient of any thing that should check or turn aside his career. He could not remit and draw in, to stay awhile, so to speak, with some one important observation, to give it individually an aggravated stress, to kindle it into an intense light, deliberately held close to the minds before him, penetrating to the recesses as a trial of the spirit, revealing unsuspected, or but slightly suspected, qualities in the feelings, the motives, the habits; and indicating unthought-of relations between these and the principles of christianity, the rules of duty, or the conditions of safety. Still pressing vigorously onward, he could not make a pause to revert unexpectedly on what he had just said; and by an appeal to the hearers for its truth, or by a brief strong inference from it, render it more impressive than it could be as hastily passing away. He could not abate his movement so as to address them with a pointed interrogation, solemn or familiar, in a manner as if waiting for a reply; thus breaking in upon any tendency there might be to their yielding themselves to be carried along in a pleasing

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reverie of admiration and vague assent; drawing them into something like a mental dialogue with him on the point, and awaking them to reflect whether they should make, or were making, any application of it to themselves. That extraordinary degree of withdrawment from recognition of the local scene, when his mind was in its full race, which has been noticed before rather as a circumstance of manner than as affecting the character of his preaching, contributed much to what is here attempted to be described. He did feel, I repeat, a benevolent interest for the congregation, as a *general* sentiment, and at times it would manifest itself expressly and even pathetically; but I still deem it a fact, that during a large proportion of his public exercise, and especially in the seasons of highest excitement, *the subject itself*, as a subject, was the grand interest. It was by *that* that he was filled, possessed, and borne along, with no more than a very general consciousness of being in communication with an auditory. The train of his thoughts, therefore, swept on at a certain altitude, as it were, in the air, rather than proceeded on a level and in contact with the people, in a series of arresting inculcations and inquisitions.

I have said that he did not *individualize* human characters. While he had a deep insight into the structure of human nature as a species, his preaching would sometimes have suggested the remark that was made on a certain philosopher, that "he understood *man* but not *men*"—I say, his *preaching;* for a different apprehension was received from his conversation. He had been acquainted less or more with a very extensive variety of persons, including most of the differences seen in society; had a remarkably exact remembrance of them; and shewed, by his characteristic descriptions and anecdotes, that he was not a superficial, though he was not a studiously intentional, observer. At all times he was interested by facts, witnessed or related, which exemplified a leading property, or a peculiar modification, of this strange nature of ours. It was therefore a cause of wonder, notwithstanding all that was so apparent of his habits of abstraction and generalization, that so many forms of the good and evil of humanity, accumulated within the ample magazine of his materials, should not be brought into service, divested, of course, of the peculiarities that would betray individual portraiture, and a little idealized into repre-

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sentatives of classes, but still of such genuine living features, that the people might recognise them as things in actual existence. Forms of character thus discriminately shaped from matter of fact, would stand forth exposing what human nature is, not merely as a *general* subject for religious and moral treatment, but also in those special modifications to which the discipline should be applied. It may then be applied with a peculiar, and, in the hands of an able man, a striking appropriateness; it will be seen to be fitted to the part; and there can be no question whether its force and probable efficacy will be much in proportion to this evidently specific pertinence. By this practice he who is desirous that truth may strike, stands much nearer to his mark, leaving less room for the shaft to pass harmlessly by in a slanting direction, than if he took a general aim from a distance. Let the blended mass of human character be thus resolved into classes, not so small certainly that the address, in order to be appropriate to each, must be frittered into minute and almost trifling particulars, yet so circumscribed that it may bear on each in one definite manner, and many persons will be made to find their own place, and find themselves brought to account, who would remain quite at their ease under a theoretic generality in the administration of the religious and moral jurisdiction; who might even approve and applaud the very lecture by which they were arraigned and condemned, in perfect impunity from any whisper of the admonition, "Thou art the man." It was to be regretted that the singularly compact conformation, and the speculative and abstract propensity, of Mr. Hall's mind, should so much have precluded his great talents and excellent purpose from this resource for augmenting the efficacy of preaching. It might be anticipated from the nature of the case, and it was verified by observation, that too many of the attendants witnessed some of the brightest displays rather with the feeling of looking at a fine picture than of being confronted by a faithful mirror; and went away equally pleased with a preacher that was so admirable, and with themselves for having the intelligence and taste to admire him.*

* A little circumstance, told me a day or two after his last sermon, which was considered of signal intellectual power, and which I have always regretted that I was prevented hearing, may not improperly be mentioned as somewhat in point to what is attempted in these paragraphs. The subject was the sin and absurdity of covetousness. After the service, one of the hearers observed to

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There was cause for observation on his manner of placing in contrast the two great divisions, the righteous and the wicked, christians and men of the world. There should be some essential test of the difference; but then what to do with all those appearances among the professedly better class, which betray so much likeness, after all, to the worse? Nothing can be more perplexing to a thoughtful beholder of men as they are, who, in disregard of all system, *must* take these signs for what they plainly import; and what they plainly import is, that whatever be the essentially distinguishing principle of the separation, there are, in numbers, whom he may not in a judgement of charity pronounce to be no christians, many grievous and habitual approximations to those who confessedly are none. At times, the whole subject will almost assume, under his view, the appearance of an affair of *gradation*, from the maximum on one side, and the minimum on the other, divided by no wide interval at the point of approach. If he be a public teacher of religion, and in that capacity under a solemn responsibility for the estimates to be entertained of the christian character, and of themselves, by his hearers, he will have a severe exercise for his caution and discrimination. He may overlook, if he will, the unhappy mixture and competition of

another, "An admirable sermon—yet why was *such* a sermon preached? For probably not one person in the congregation, though it is not wanting in examples of the vice in question, would take the discourse as at all applicable to himself."—The preacher had employed his whole force on the love of money *as a pure and absolute principle*. The person who made the remark meant to say, that hardly any one will acknowledge to be, or indeed is *conscious* of being, actuated by this pure absolute principle, however tenacious of his money, or insatiably grasping at more. No; the passion enslaves and befools him under secondary and more plausible forms. He wishes to have the means of setting his family advantageously forward in the world; he says so, and thinks so, even though possibly unwilling to do any thing for them as yet. It is desirable to have the means of maintaining a respectable station in society. It is gratifying to be looked up to with the deference universally shewn to wealth. Perhaps the man has had experience of straitened circumstances in early life, and cannot make too sure against its recurrence. There is much liability to hazard, and losses, and it is prudent to be well provided. It would be a miserable thing to suffer penury in old age.—Now, an invective against the love of money, to be practically useful, would seize and expose it in those modes of its operation, under which it hides or palliates its true quality, and beguiles out of all self-suspicion the most desperate idolater of Mammon. A lecture on covetousness, which should concentrate its whole rebuke on the love of money taken abstractedly, might even do mischief; for every hearer who could say he did not *so* love money, would confidently infer, that therefore he was not guilty of covetousness.

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evil with the good in the better division of actual human characters; and indulge himself in the pleasure of constructing and setting up a golden image (not like that which, with a portion of gold, was composed for the greater part of baser materials, as low as clay) the radiant *ideal* of all the christian graces and virtues assembled in harmony and perfection. But to what end? Is it that the people, when they recover themselves to consideration, may, with grief on the part of the pious and benevolent, and with malignant pleasure on the part of the profane, adjudge the greater proportion of those who have a general acceptance as religious persons, not to be truly such? Or is it, that persons sincerely intent on religion, actuated in some considerable degree by its spirit, but painfully conscious of a vast disparity to the pattern so splendidly exhibited, should therefore resign themselves to despondency? Or what else? What else?—unless, after looking up to this consummate pattern, the teacher, taking a descending track of thought, shall exert his best judgement to shew, through several degrees cautiously followed downward, how the genuine principle may exist where there is much at variance with it; insisting, at each grade, on the manner in which it is essential for that principle to act, in proof that it is really there notwithstanding the offensive things that keep their place with it; and solemnly protesting against the fatal propensity to find a ground of safety at the last lowest point at which it may be hoped, that the principle may still be not absolutely incompatible with that with which it is inconsistent?

It appeared a serious defect in Mr. Hall's preaching, that he practically took on him too little of this responsibility. In temporary oblivion of the rule that theoretic description should keep existing fact so much in view that a right adjustment may be made between them, he would expatiate in eloquent latitude on the christian character, bright and "full-orbed" in all its perfections, of contempt of the world, victory over temptation, elevated devotion, assimilation to the divine image, zeal for the divine glory, triumphant faith, expansive charity, sanctity of life; without an intimation, at the time or afterwards, that all this, so sublime if it were realized, so obligatory as the attainment toward which a christian should be, at whatever distance, aspiring, is yet unhappily to be subjected, in behalf of our poor nature, to a cautious discussion of modifications and degrees;

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especially when the anxious question comes to be, *What deficiencies prove a man to be no christian?*

Now a hearer, left to some coolness of thought, was tempted to say to himself, What do the people think of this?—if indeed they *do* think, if they be not beguiled away from reflection. How does it strike the many persons in this large assembly, who, respectable perhaps as men of the world, make no pretension to what is meant by personal religion; and how those others who despise or hate it, and would hardly endure to hear any thing about it but for the sake of the eloquence which they think might have been more worthily employed?* Are they carrying out, in imagination, this brilliant picture into the real world, where they have observed and descried, with no little vigilance, the culpable tempers, habits, and proceedings, the inconsistencies, weaknesses, and errors, of many whom the preacher himself would be the last man to pronounce altogether destitute of piety? But if they do make this invidious use of the description, will they not with pernicious self-complacency assume—not exactly that all are alike, but—that none are christians, or that super-emphatically they must be "few that be saved," if absolutely *this alone* be christianity? Why *let* them go off with this mischievous advantage?

And how does it strike the persons here, who stand in the recognised accepted class of the religious? Have they, while hearing this elevated strain, any such thing as reflection on themselves? Is their conscience lulled by what might seem adapted in all reason to alarm it? Have they no secret monition—are the very serpents themselves that infest a corrupt and but imperfectly renovated nature, so charmed into stillness that there is no consciousness—of many things which this grand exemplar shines but to expose and condemn? What! is there no internal voice to accuse them, any of them, of such things as a proneness to an excessive love of the world, as coldness of devotion, reluctance to duty, insubordination to the divine will, lapses into a besetting sin, the indulgence of evil tempers, selfish competition with fellow-mortals, frequent forgetfulness of hereafter? If there be not; if their admiration of the

* I recollect the instance of a gentleman expressing, at the conclusion of the public service, the highest admiration of the preacher, and adding, "What pity Mr. Hall's great talents had not been destined to the Bar or the House of Commons, where he would have made so capital a figure!"

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beautiful image of christian excellence in the abstract carry them away from all consciousness of what is unlike it in themselves, it is quite time to come down to a strain that shall turn their thoughts homeward, and bring them into a consideration of what they are virtually doing in admiring such a model; shall excite them to reflect, if they so admire one and another feature of it, what they should think of this and the other circumstance in their actual condition. It would be well to bring them to the questions of, What is the difference? and, Why such a difference? and, What would be the right feeling under the self-conviction of such a difference? Let them not be suffered to regard this bright model merely as the ideal representation of something so unattainable on earth, that they are absolved from any serious consideration whether, and how, they have formed a judgement of what *is* attainable and *must* be attained; what they are really wishing to attain; what they think they *have* attained; why it is no more; what are the conscious evils yet unsubdued; what they deem the proportion of those evils to be to the better part; how they measure that proportion, and ascertain the predominance of the good; and whether they be disposed to content themselves with that state of the case.

But if, on the contrary, this bright exhibition of the christian character, instead of playing harmlessly over them like an aurora borealis, has sent his rays deeply into their souls, and is bringing more plainly to their own view the evils lurking there, the sinful propensities, the spiritual disorders of whatever class, with the addition of the moral and practical ones resulting externally, in what manner are they adjusting that very serious contrast, so as to maintain a confidence that, nevertheless, on the whole the case is safe? No doubt it must be, by making very large allowances for the sad imperfection of our nature. But would it not be well for the christian instructor to endeavour to take that somewhat hazardous process out of the hands of their self-love, by interfering himself in the adjudication of what may be conceded to a fallen nature, on such conditions as shall not essentially invalidate the demands of religion?

As the last observation I would take the liberty to make, I may note the same prevailing inadvertence to the realities of life in Mr. Hall's manner of representing the *happiness* conferred by religion; premising, as a thing somewhat of a piece

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with this particular, that he would sometimes indulge in language hardly consonant to either theory or experience in what, undesignedly, it seemed to imply of the *facility* of entering, by a transition of spirit and action, on the christian life. I will confess he did appear to me, in reference to this matter, to lose sight too much, when he surrendered himself to the animated current of his sentiments, of the desperate and obstinate alienation of the human soul from its Creator. It was not that he did not most fully believe this to be the condition of our nature, on the evidence of both Scripture and notorious fact; or that he did not hold, according to the strictest Calvinistic construction, the doctrine of the necessity of a special divine agency for men's conversion to a new spiritual state; but that, when his mind was kindled at the attractions and glories of religion, he would forget, for the time, both how lost are those attractions on a corrupt nature, and what a dreadful combination of influences there is to retain it in its aversion.

But to revert to the specified topic, the representation of the *happiness* of the christian character. He would describe with a prolonged effusion of beautiful sentiment and language, the delightful confidence in the divine favour, the harmony and communion of the pious spirit with its God and Saviour, the independence on sublunary things, the superiority to the cares and distractions of life, the serenity of trust in Providence under the greatest trials or most menacing presages, the cordial invariable acquiescence in the divine dispensations, the victory over the fear of death, the unclouded prospect into eternity. Now it needs not be said that such *would* be the felicities of a condition exalted to the absolute perfection of christianity; or that the religious instructor should point to these elevations, as the eminence toward which it is the tendency of religion to draw the human spirit, and toward which a christian is to aspire, however remote his utmost ascent may be from reaching it. He may do well to cite from the memorials of good men, some of the examples most remarkably approaching to a practical evidence, that such is the felicity which it is in the nature of religion to impart. And he will have at once to reprove those who, regarding such a privileged existence as something like a visionary scene suspended in the sky, rather than a state partially attainable by mortals, are resting with a dull acquiescence in a poverty of religious enjoyment; and to console

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and animate those whose earnest aspirations are repressed by the consciousness how little they attain. But if, in describing the happiness of a christian, he take it at its highest degree, to which the experience of the most devout men has risen only at some favoured seasons, (at least if they had much to do with the world's concerns,) and spread out the representation in imagery all formed of the finest elements, omitting to advert to the actual state of good men, so beset and overrun with things which deny them to be so happy, it would be inevitable for the supposed cool-minded hearer to have his thoughts once more looking off to matters of fact. He would say to himself, "It may be taken as certain, that many among the sincere christians in this assembly are in circumstances which must make them listen to this unqualified representation with pain or with incredulity. Some of them are harassed, without the possibility of escape, by the state of their worldly affairs; perhaps suffering or dreading disasters beyond the reach of prudence to prevent; anxiously awaiting a critical turn of events; vexed beyond the patience of Job by the untowardness, selfishness, or dishonesty encountered in their transactions. Some are enduring the cares and hardships of poverty. Some are distressed by bad dispositions among their nearest kindred; perhaps by anticipations, grievous in proportion to their piety, of the conduct and ultimate destiny of their children. Some may have come here for an hour who are fixed in the sad situation of witnessing the slow but certain progress of persons, whose life is on all accounts most important to them, in a descent toward the grave. Some are experiencing, while strenuously maintaining, a severe conflict between the good and evil in their own minds. Some may be in mortifying recollection of lapses into which they have been betrayed. Some are of melancholic temperament; and while striving to keep hold of their faith and hope, are apt to see whatever concerns their welfare in an unfavourable view in every direction, and especially in looking forward to death. Some, of contemplative disposition, are often oppressed, even to a degree of danger to their piety, by the gloom which involves the economy of the world, where moral evil has been predominant through all the course of time. In short, it is probable that the much larger proportion of the religious persons now present are in no condition to allow a possibility of their yielding themselves in

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sympathy with the spirit of this celebration of the happiness of religion.—Would it not, then, be a more useful manner of illustrating this subject, to carry it into a trial on the actual circumstances of the christian life; to place it, with appropriate discriminations, by the side of the real situations of good men; to shew that, notwithstanding all, religion *can* insure a *preponderance* of happiness; to demonstrate *how* it can do so; to point out the most efficacious means, in each case respectively, and urge their diligent use; to suggest consolations for deficient success, with a note of admonition respecting such of its causes as require that reproof be mixed with encouragement; all the while keeping in view that condition of our existence on earth, which renders it inevitable that the happiness created even by religion, for the men most faithfully devoted to it, should not be otherwise than greatly incomplete?"

These observations have grown to a length beyond my intention or expectation; and I should have been better pleased if I could have felt assured, that a far less protracted criticism might suffice for an intelligible description of the nature and operation of certain things, in the character of Mr. Hall's ministration, which I had presumed to think not adapted, in the proportion of its eminent intellectual superiority, to practical effect.

It is not to be exacted of the greatest talents that they have an equal aptitude to two widely different modes of operation. Nor is any invidious comparison to be made between the respective merits of excelling in the one and in the other. But, indeed, it were impossible to make any comparative estimate that *should* be invidious to Mr. Hall, if the question were of intellect, considered *purely as a general element of strength.* To attain high excellence in the manner of preaching which I have indicated as what might be a more useful than his, though it require a clear-sighted faculty, disciplined in vigilant and various exercise, is within the competence of a mind of much more limited energy and reach than Mr. Hall's power and range of speculative thought. At the same time it is not to be denied, that such a mode of conducting the ministration, whatever were the talents employed, were they even of the highest order, would demand a much more laborious and complicated process than it cost our great preacher to produce his luminous expositions of christian doctrine, with

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those eloquent, but too general, practical applications into which the discussion changed toward the close. Indeed, there is reason to believe that, besides the circumstances which I have noted as indisposing and partly unfitting him to adapt his preaching discriminatively to the states and characters of men as they are, another preventing cause was, a repugnance to the kind and degree of labour required in such an operation. For some passages found in his writings appear to prove that his conception of the most effective manner of preaching was very considerably different from his general practice.* I repeat, his *general* practice; for it would be wrong to dismiss these comments without observing that he did, sometimes, discuss and illustrate a topic in a special and continued application to circumstances in the plain reality of men's condition. And when he did so it was with striking and valuable effect. I shall, for instance, never forget the admiration with which I heard a sermon, chiefly addressed to the young, from the text, "For every thing there is a time." Nothing could exceed the accuracy of delineation, and the felicitous management of language, with which he marked the circumstances, conjunctures, and temptations of real life: the specific interests, duties, dangers, vices; the consequences in futurity of early wisdom or

* Several paragraphs might be cited from his sermon on the "Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister." I will transcribe two or three sentences.

"The epidemic malady of our nature assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment. . . . . Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic; that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good, will endeavour, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. . . . . It is thus the christian minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself." Works, Vol. I. pp. 238, 239.

To the same effect, there are several pages of advice to preachers, in the "Fragment on Village Preaching." The value of the whole section will be but partially apprehended from the following extracts.

"A notion prevails among some, that to preach the Gospel includes nothing more than a recital or recapitulation of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. If these are firmly believed and zealously embraced, they are ready to believe the work is done, and that all the virtues of the christian character will follow by necessary consequence. Hence they satisfy themselves with recommending holiness in general terms, without entering into its particular duties; and his,

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folly; and the inseparable relation of every temporal and moral interest to religion; with an inculcation of which, conceived in faithful appropriateness to the preceding topics, he closed in a strain of what merited to be irresistible pathos.* Sermons of a tenour to class them with this, were heard at intervals, not so wide but that the number might be somewhat considerable within the space of two or three years. It should be observed, however, that their construction was still not wholly diverse from his general manner. The style of address was not marked by rises and falls; did not alternate between familiarity and magisterial dignity; was not modified by varying impulses into a strain which, as was said of Chatham's eloquence, was of every kind by turns. It was sustained, unintermitted, of unrelaxing gravity, in one order of language, and, after a short progress from the commencement, constantly rapid in delivery. But still those sermons were cast in the best imaginable compromise between, on the one hand, the theoretic speculation and high-pitched rhetoric to which he was addicted, and, on the other, that recognition of what men actually are in situation and character, to which his mind did not so easily descend. They were the sermons which the serious and intelligent hearers regretted that people of every class, in many times the number of the actual congregation, should not have the benefit of hearing; and which it is now their deep and unavailing regret that he could not be induced to render a lasting, I might say a perennial, source of utility to the public.

in such a manner, as rather to predict it as the result of certain opinions, than to enforce it on the ground of moral obligation. . . . . The conscience is not likely to be touched by general declamations on the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness, without delineation of character. . . . . He must know little of human nature, who perceives not the callousness of the human heart, and the perfect indifference with which it can contemplate the most alarming truths when they are presented in a general abstract form. It is not in this way that religious instruction can be made permanently interesting. It is when particular vices are displayed as they appear in real life, when the arts of self-deception are detected, and the vain excuses by which a sinner palliates his guilt, evades the conviction of conscience, and secures a delusive tranquillity: in a word, it is when the heart is forced to see in itself the original of what is described by the apostle; and, perceiving that the secrets of his heart are made manifest, he falls down, and confesses that God is among us of a truth. The reproof which awakened David from his guilty slumber, and made him weep and tremble, turned, not on the general evil of sin, but on the peculiar circumstances of aggravation, attending that which he had committed." Works, Vol. V. p. 382.

* One of the reported sermons in the sixth volume, that on the "Love of God," is a remarkable example of specific illustration, pointedly applied.

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I cannot be aware whether the opinions, or feelings less definite than opinions, of readers who have had the advantage of hearing Mr. Hall, will coincide with the observations ventured in these latter pages. Those who have heard him but very occasionally, will be incompetent judges of their propriety. I remember that at a time very long since, when I had not heard more perhaps than three or four of his sermons, I did not apprehend the justness, or, indeed, very clearly the import, of a remark on that characteristic of his preaching which I have attempted to describe, when made to me by his warm friend, and most animated admirer, Dr. Ryland; who said that Mr. Hall's preaching had, with an excellence in some respects unrivalled, the fault of being *too general;* and he contrasted it with that of Mr. Hall's father, who had erred, he thought, on the side of a too minute particularity.—But whether these strictures be admitted or questioned, I will confidently take credit with every candid reader, for having, as in the character of historian, and disclaiming the futile office of panegyrist, deliberately aimed at a faithful description of this memorable preacher, as he appeared during that latter period of his public ministrations, to which my opportunity of frequent attendance on them has unfortunately been confined.

I can hardly think it should be necessary to protest against such a misunderstanding of these latter pages as should take them to imply, that Mr. Hall's preaching was not eminently useful, notwithstanding those qualities of it which tended to prevent its being so in full proportion to the mighty force of mind which it displayed. Its beneficial effect is testified by the experience of a multitude of persons, of various orders of character. Intelligent, cultivated, and inquiring young persons, some of them favourably inclined to religion, but repelled by the uncouth phraseology, and the meanness and trite commonplace illustration, in which they had unfortunately seen it presented; some of them under temptations to scepticism, and others to a rejection of some essential principle of christianity, were attracted and arrested by a lucid and convincing exhibition of divine truth. Men of literature and talents, and men of the world who were not utterly abandoned to impiety and profligacy, beheld religion set forth with a vigour and a lustre, and with an earnest sincerity infinitely foreign to all mere *professional* display, which once more shewed religion worthy

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to command, and fitted to elevate, the most powerful minds; which augmented the zeal of the faithful among those superior spirits, and sometimes constrained the others to say, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Men of sectarian spirit were cheated of a portion of their bigotry, or forced into a consciousness that they ought to be ashamed of it. And, as a good of a more diffusive kind, numbers of people of the common order were held under a habitual impression of the importance of religion; and the enumeration would, I believe, be very considerable if it could be made, of individuals indebted to his ministry for those effectual convictions which have resulted in their devotement to God, and their happiness in life and death.

It is very possible, that those parts which I have so much dilated on, with the view of representing how a different manner might have been more useful, will, by some persons, be acknowledged to be correctly described as matter of fact, without agreeing with my opinion as to the degree in which they were defective for usefulness. But at all events, and whatever the just exception may be to an unqualified eulogy, it is exactly by those whose discernment the least permitted them to be undiscriminating in their admiration, that the deepest regret is felt for the departure of that great and enlightened spirit. The crude admiration which can make no distinctions, never renders justice to what is really great. The colossal form is seen through a mist, dilated perhaps, but obscured and undefined, instead of standing forth conspicuous in its massive solidity and determinate lineaments and dimensions. The less confused apprehension of the object verifies its magnitude while perceiving its clear line of circumscription. The persons who could see where Mr. Hall's rare excellence had a limit short of the ideal perfection of a preacher, would, by the same judgement, form the justest and the highest estimate of the offerings which, in his person, reason and genius consecrated to religion—of the force of evidence with which he maintained its doctrines, of the solemn energy with which he urged its obligations, and of the sublimity with which he displayed its relations and prospects.

By those persons, the loss is reflected on with a sentiment peculiar to the event, never experienced before, nor to be expected in any future instance. The removal of any worthy

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minister, while in full possession and activity of his faculties, is a mournful occurrence; but there is the consideration that many such remain, and that perhaps an equal may follow where the esteemed instructor is withdrawn. But the feeling in the present instance is of a loss altogether irreparable. The cultivated portion of the hearers have a sense of privation partaking of desolateness. An animating influence that pervaded, and enlarged, and raised their minds is extinct. While ready to give due honour to all valuable preachers, and knowing that the lights of religious instruction will still shine with useful lustre, and new ones continually rise, they involuntarily and pensively turn to look at the last fading colours in the distance where the greater luminary has set.

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NOTE.

SERAMPORE MISSIONARIES.

In this collection of Mr. Hall's works, every thing is inserted that was published with his sanction, and that is known to have been written by him, with the exception of a single letter, which he many years ago engaged to suppress. But, on inserting the letter in reference to the Serampore Missionaries, (Vol. IV. p. 415,) I inadvertently omitted to mention, that it received a place in consequence of the general rule thus adopted, and without asking the concurrence of Mr. Foster. I therefore think it right to insert a letter from Mr. Foster, relative to what he regards as Mr. Hall's misapprehension of some main points in a most painful subject of discussion. The controversy between the London Committee and the Serampore Missionaries, I have always deeply deplored. Yet, I have an entire persuasion that the Committee did every thing in *their* power to avoid it, and abstained from making it public until they were compelled to do so by a feeling of duty to the Society, with the management of whose concerns they are entrusted.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

TO DR. GREGORY.

MY DEAR SIR,

I observe you have admitted into the fourth volume of Mr. Hall's works, very possibly without having had time, amidst your various and important engagements, for a deliberate consideration, a letter written by Mr. Hall to the "Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society," in March, 1827, on the occasion of a request from the Serampore Missionaries, for a certain annual grant of money from that Society. As that letter is calculated to injure the character of those Missionaries in the estimation of the readers of Mr. Hall's works in times to come, allow me to submit to you, whether it be not a claim of justice that you should give a place, in the concluding volume, to an observation or two which I have to offer.

Some of the points alluded to, with implied censure, in that letter, (those respecting the constitutional terms of the relation which had subsisted between the Society and those Missionaries) will be matters of small account in the view of the future generation of readers. But the main purport and effect of that letter must be, in the apprehension of those readers, to fix a dishonourable imputation on personal character. It is charged upon the Serampore fraternity (as well collectively as in their representative, Dr. Marshman) that they were rapacious of money; that they were apparently practising to see how much of it they could extort, on the strength of their reputation, as presumed by them to be of essential importance to that of the

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Society; that they were already exceeding the utmost pardonable advance of encroachment; that they were likely to be progressive and insatiable in their exactions; and that their possession, at the very same time, of "an extensive revenue," "large pecuniary resources," rendering needless to them the assistance applied for, stamped a peculiar character of arrogance on that attempt at exaction.

Suppose a reader at some distant time to form his judgement exclusively on this representation, as an authentic and sufficient evidence; and what can he think of those men, but that they must have been, to say no more, some of the most unreasonable of mankind?—that though they did perform things which remain memorable in religious history, they were not worthy of their high vocation, for that the merit of their performances was spoiled by a grasping selfishness and an exorbitant arrogance? This supposition, that the document in question may have on the judgement of readers an effect inimical to the memory of those original Missionaries, long after they are dead, is authorized by the probability that Mr. Hall's writings will retain a place in public attention and favour, long after the occasional productions of the present time, in explanation and defence of the conduct of those Missionaries, shall have gone out of knowledge.

Now, my dear Sir, let me appeal to your sense of justice whether it be right, that this unqualified invective, written for a temporary purpose, without probably the least thought of publication, and written, as I shall prove to you, under extreme error, should be perpetuated in a standard work, as a stigma on the character of those men, without the admission also into the same work, for equal permanence, of a brief notice adapted to correct the wrong. The wrong is no less than this—that the charge, such as I have described it in plain conformity to the document, is made on men who, having prosecuted a course of indefatigable exertions in the christian cause, one of them for more than a quarter of a century, and another a much longer time, during more than twenty years of which they had not received or asked any share of the Society's income—having supported themselves, and performed their great literary, and their other missionary operations gratuitously—having, besides this, expended in the christian service, during a long period, several thousand pounds a-year from resourses created by their own diligence—and having also contributed very largely by their high reputation to the public credit and success of the Society itself—could not, after all this, conceive it to be an unreasonable "exaction," or "extortion," to request the aid of a sixth part of the Society's annual income, when at last their own had become greatly diminished, chiefly in consequence of the establishment of other printing offices and schools in the neighbouring city.

But the case being so, it may be asked, with some surprise, how Mr. Hall could be betrayed to write such a letter. I can assign what must have been the chief cause. He believed he had reason to place implicit confidence in testimony, which assured him, that the Serampore Missionaries were at that very time in the possession of superabundant wealth; and he happened not to be in communication with informants, who could have proved to him that the contrary was the fact, to a painful extreme. It is from my own immediate knowledge that I make this statement. In a long conversation, just about the time that the letter to the Committee was written, he affirmed to me and

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several other friends, on the authority of testimony which he assigned, and held to be unquestionable, that those Missionaries had the command of what might truly be called (speaking in relative proportion to such a concern) an *immense* capital and income. I could give you the sums in figures, but forbear, purely in consideration of their extravagance. Suffice it to say, that the amount was most palpably and enormously beyond any alleged or conceivable necessities of such an establishment. Entirely confident in this belief, he thought, of course, that an application to the Society for aid was a most unreasonable claim; whereas, the fact was, as Dr. Marshman represented, and as Dr. Carey soon after confirmed, that it was made from the pressure of pecuniary difficulty, which was forcing the brethren at Serampore to the alternative of either obtaining assistance in this country, or abandoning several of their missionary stations. Had Mr. Hall been aware of the real state of the case, he would not have written a single sentence of that letter. It was unfortunate that he should have been so credulous to delusive representations.

Again appealing to your justice for the insertion of this note of explanation somewhere in the concluding volume,

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Yours, with the greatest regard,

J. FOSTER.

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SERMONS.

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SERMONS.

I.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

ISAIAH xxxi. 3.—*The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.**

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, APRIL 14, 1822, AND AT BRISTOL IN AUGUST, 1824.]

AMONG the sins to which the ancient Israelites were addicted, one of the most prevailing was, a disposition, in seasons of invasion or calamity, to place confidence in the power of surrounding nations, and to seek the assistance of their sovereigns instead of trusting in the living God. By this they frequently incurred divine chastisement, and in some instances even divine dereliction. Egypt, being the largest monarchy in their immediate neighbourhood, was frequently their refuge in times of distress and difficulty. Their guilt in thus departing from God was greatly aggravated, on account of the intimate relation to them which he sustained as their king and sovereign, by virtue

* Printed from the Notes of Joshua Wilson, Esq. See Vol. V. pp. 7—13, for Mr. Hall's brief notes of the same sermon.

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of which he had engaged to protect them by his mighty power so long as they adhered to his service and allegiance; while the frequent manifestation of his uncontrollable dominion over the natural world, displayed in the signal deliverances he had wrought for them, rendered the transfer of their confidence from him to "an arm of flesh," equally criminal and foolish. "Woe to them," saith the prophet, "that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!"* Then in a strain of pointed irony he severely reproves their preference, by reminding them that God possessed those qualities of foresight and force, which justified entire dependence; and that whatever grounds for confidence they fancied to exist in the character of the Egyptian potentate, were found in a degree infinitely greater in that of the Almighty—"Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: (alluding to the conduct of Pharaoh, who had often broken the promises and violated the engagements he had made) but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity." He will not only arise against the workers of iniquity, but against their helpers also; and will cause them all to fail together; "for the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit."

* Isaiah xxxi. 1.

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In these words we are reminded of an important and infinite disparity between God and man; arising from a great peculiarity in the character of the former, which rendered the Egyptian monarch and his cavalry infinitely inferior to Him in power, and all those other qualities which entitle the possessor of them to confidence and trust.

It is my design to suggest to you some of those views of the character of the Supreme Being, inseparably connected with the spirituality of his nature, wherein he stands contrasted with all other beings whatever.

I. The spirituality of the Deity is intimately connected with the possession of that infinite unlimited power, which renders him the proper object of entire confidence.

There is a vulgar prejudice in favour of matter and against spirit, as if the former were possessed of great force, while the latter is only invested with a feeble degree of energy. Hence, in contemplating the operations of the elements of nature producing great and important changes, we are apt to think of matter, and of matter in its most gross and palpable form. This prejudice arises from our mistaking secondary and remote effects for causes, allowing them therefore to terminate our view, instead of ascending from those laws of nature which God has established, to himself the supreme cause. These changes certainly indicate the existence of great power, which, at the first view, we are apt to connect with the material part of the system. We are also acquainted in a measure

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with the mechanical forces, and, seeing that these are exerted through the medium of matter, we are thence led to suppose that to be the source of power. We find that we are incapable of operating on matter, of moving even an atom by a mere act of our will; a material medium is necessary to enable us to produce the slightest change on the objects of nature; and if a material substance is brought to bear upon them, the most important effects are produced. We have no power of operating on the objects immediately around us, but by means of our bodies; and the changes that take place are always connected with certain motions in them, which enable us to come into contact with the visible world. Hence we are apt to terminate our ideas of power in matter. But in these cases it is *mind,* and mind alone which is the seat of power. The influence which our bodies have upon other bodies, whereby their relative position is changed, is merely a secondary effect—an effect of that act of will which produces the motion of our bodies. The power by which all changes are effected through the instrumentality of the body, resides immediately in the mind. It is that mysterious principle, called Will, which the Divine Being has invested with a control over the various parts of our bodies; nor have we power to alter the state of a single external thing, in the least degree, except by means of volition, which is a mental power, operating immediately upon the body. No other account can be given of this capacity, but that the Divine Being has endowed us with

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instantaneous control over the muscular parts of our bodies. We can conceive nothing intermediate between the act of the will and the movement of the muscles. So complete indeed is the dominion of mind over matter, that the moment we will a certain motion in the body, it takes place, and thus only are we enabled to effect changes in the system of surrounding nature. We probably derive our idea of power from the changes we see effected in this manner; but all these changes resolve themselves into acts of the will. It is therefore plain that power resides in the *mind*, and that matter is in these respects only the instrument of mind, which in the first instance acts, which alone properly acts, and becomes the author of all the subsequent changes. Mind, indeed, to a certain extent and within a certain sphere, is absolute power; and whatever motions it wills, instantly take place. Though we are far from supposing for a moment that the Divine Being is the soul of the universe, or that he bears the same relation to the visible world as the soul does to the body—a notion replete with absurdity and impiety; yet the power which the mind exerts over the whole of our corporeal system, may afford an apt illustration of that control which the Deity exercises over the universe. We will a certain motion in the muscles of our body, and immediately it takes place; nothing is perceived to intervene between the act of the will and the subsequent motion. By the mysterious constitution of our nature we are capable, from a very early period of life, of putting

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into instantaneous motion the right set of muscles for producing a certain change; but nothing intervenes between the volition and the change. In vain do we inquire how this takes place, because we can find nothing which comes between the operation of the will and the change produced in our corporeal frame.

Conceive the Divine Being as a spirit, having the same dominion over the invisible universe, in every part of space as that which our minds possess over every portion of our bodies; and then you will perceive, faintly at least, the origin of that power, the indications of which are so visible throughout the universe. He has only to will the most important changes, and they are instantly accomplished. "He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast." "He said, Let there be light, and there was light." No causes intervene between the volition and the change which ensues, for the will of the Deity is itself the effect. Being an infinite Spirit, and coming into immediate contact with all parts of the universe, he is capable, by a mere act of will, of effecting all possible changes in the same manner, but in an infinitely higher degree, as we are capable, by an act of our will, of causing certain motions in the muscular parts of our body, and thus producing changes in the external objects around us.

We shall find it impossible to give any account of innumerable changes which are continually taking place in the visible world, without tracing them up to mind. There cannot be a clearer

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proof of a Deity, than the existence of motion. This evidently appears not to be essential to matter, because we see a very great portion of the material universe without it. Not being therefore an original state of matter, but merely an incident, it must be an effect. But since matter, not being intelligent, cannot be the cause of its own motion, and yet we cannot conceive of any atom beginning to move without a cause, that cause must be found out of itself. Whatever may be the nearest cause, or the number of secondary causes; though innumerable portions of matter may be reciprocally moved; though the series of links in the chain through which motion is propagated may be indefinitely multiplied; we must, in order to arrive at the origin of these various phenomena, ascend to mind, terminate our inquiries in spirit; nor can we account for the beginning, much less for the continuance and extension of motion, unless we trace it to the will of that Being, who is the cause of all causes—the great original mover in the universe. Power is, therefore, the attribute of mind; instrumentality that of body. When we read in the Old Testament of the most exalted achievements ascribed to angelic spirits, we cannot suppose that it is owing to any gross materialism which they possess; on the contrary, they have no bodies capable of being investigated by our senses; and, in proportion as they are more attenuated, do they possess greater power. We have reason to believe that all finite minds are under the direction of the Supreme

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Power, who without destroying their accountability or interfering with their free agency, makes all their operations subservient to the accomplishment of his counsels. Hence all opposition to the Deity is beautifully represented by Isaiah, as if the instrument should rebel against him that wields it, as if "the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up;" or "the staff should lift up itself against him that is no wood."* All created beings, in this respect, are but instruments in the hand of the Deity, whose will is sovereign over them.

The Divine Being, as the great Father of spirits, combines within himself all the separate energies found in the universe. He is the source, origin, and fountain of all power diffused through creation. The very minds which he has formed are kept in mysterious subordination, and can never overstep the bounds he has assigned them. "Once have I heard this, that power belongs unto God."

II. The spirituality of God stands in close and intimate connexion with his invisibility, or that property by which he is completely removed from the notice of our senses, especially that of sight.

This is one of the perfections claimed by him in sacred writ, one of the attributes which the Scriptures perpetually ascribe to him. He is styled by the apostle Paul, the "King eternal, immortal, *invisible*," — "the blessed and only Potentate," — "*whom no man hath seen, nor can see.*"† "*No man*," said our Saviour, "*hath seen the Father at*

* Isaiah x. 15; Bishop Lowth's translation.

† 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

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any time." He is the *invisible God.* Were he the object of sight, he must be limited. Whatever manifestations he may make of himself, it is utterly impossible that his essence, or He himself, should ever be the object of our corporeal sensations; for these extend only to visible and sensible objects. He cannot therefore be represented to the human imagination, or be figured out by any art or skill of man, agreeably to the sublime discourse of the apostle to the Athenians.* He was pleased, indeed, in former times, to afford to his ancient people in the wilderness, and afterwards in the tabernacle and the temple, some outward tokens of his presence, but these were not any display of his essence. Moses, when warning the people against forming any graven image, or picture of the Deity, expressly declares that they "saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto them in Horeb."† The third commandment contains an express injunction against exhibiting any representation of the Deity to the eyes of mankind. Hence we may perceive the great impiety of those sects of christians in different parts of the world, especially of the church of Rome, who have attempted to paint and figure out the persons of the Trinity, in express contradiction to this divine edict, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image,"‡ &c.

The worship of that erroneous and idolatrous church consists very much in acts of homage paid

* Acts xvii. 24—29. † Deut. iv. 15.
‡ Exod. xx. 4, 5.

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to these external representations; and, though her advocates profess that they are offered to God through them as media, are too often, we cannot but fear, terminated upon them, and thus supplant that spiritual worship which the Divine Being claims in consequence of his being a spirit. We need not wonder, therefore, at the pains taken by that church to suppress the second commandment; entirely omitting that precept in some of her formularies, and dividing another commandment into two to make up the number ten. The necessary effect of any attempt to exhibit the Deity to the human senses, by pictures or images, must be to degrade, to an incalculable degree, our conceptions of him; partly as it circumscribes what is unlimited, and partly as it is adapted to mingle the passions and affections of the human nature with our conception of the Divine. The notion of an Infinite Being is utterly inconsistent with any outward figure or shape, which would confine, to a certain determinate portion of space, Him who declares of himself, "*Do not I fill heaven and earth?*" and thus limit the infinite presence and majesty of the great Eternal. No sooner do men attempt to make the Deity an object of their senses, than they begin to think him altogether such an one as themselves. Descending from the high and holy place where the Divine Being dwells, the mind, accustomed to contemplate him under a visible form, gradually sinks lower and lower in approximation to its own level, till at last men come to conceive of him as compassed with

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infirmities like themselves. Hence, where such representations of Deity have prevailed, images of other beings, more suited to their gross taste, have been introduced: at first angels; but at length, by a natural process, the chief place in their religious affections has become occupied by the Virgin Mary, and other saints of inferior character, who have received much greater abundance of these marks of devotion and homage than the Supreme Being himself. So impossible is it for the church of Rome to purge itself from the charge of that idolatry which the Scriptures most severely denounce. Were there no other reason to deter persons from the communion of that church, her profane tampering with the very elements of devotion, and poisoning the first principles of religion, were alone sufficient to inspire all true christians with the utmost abhorrence. For, the same authority which forbids the transfer of worship from a right to a wrong object, also stigmatizes all deviation from the prescribed standard, in the manner of worshipping the Divine Being himself. Could we see nothing of a tendency to lead on to greater abominations in this "chamber of imagery," till it terminate in hero and idol worship, nay, in the worship of wood and stone, it is expressly forbidden; and this prohibition is alone sufficient to stamp it with the character of impiety.

III. That God is a spirit, and not flesh, is inseparably connected with his immensity and omnipresence, or the capacity of being present in all parts of his creation.

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Omnipresence is an attribute which both reason and scripture teach us to ascribe to the Deity, and which he repeatedly assumes to himself: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."* "Whither," says the Psalmist, "shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."† We are taught to believe that the essence of the Divine Being is diffused over all space—that there is not an atom existing in its boundless extent which he does not fill with his presence and energy. Were his nature material this could not be, for the following reasons:—

1. It is necessary that matter should have some *figure*, without which we cannot even conceive it to exist, whether we regard it as a whole, and include the aggregate of material substances, or look at the several portions of which that aggregate

* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. † Ps. cxxxix. 7—12.

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consists, and contemplate its parts as having a separate existence. Figure seems essential to the conception of all matter; but that which has any assignable figure must be circumscribed within a certain outline; there must, then, be some point of space where it terminates, and where vacuity begins, consequently it must be limited. To conceive, therefore, of the Divine Being as material, would be to involve ourselves in absurdity; for matter infinitely extended implies a contradiction, by uniting two opposite and irreconcilable suppositions.

2. If matter were unlimited there would be no possibility of motion: but this is a supposition contrary to fact and experience; for we perceive that motion every where exists. It is obvious that there could be no motion unless there were some space not previously occupied by body. In a perfect plenum, motion would be impossible, because there would be no possibility of conceiving that space into which the first moving body might pass.

3. If the Divine Being were material, it would be impossible that he should be infinite in his essence, fill all space, penetrate all substances, pervade all minds; because, on that supposition, he would render impossible the co-existence of created beings. We cannot conceive of two portions of matter occupying the same part of space. Were the Deity therefore material, he must exclude from the space he occupies, all other matter; and since he is infinite, that exclusion must be perfect

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and entire: but this being contrary to physical fact, is certainly contrary to intellectual truth. Whereas God, being a spirit, subsists in a totally different manner from all material substances; his manner of existence being altogether peculiar to himself, and such as we cannot adequately conceive. It follows, however, that any material substance and the Divine Being are capable of being present in the same place, at the same time, without destroying each other's properties and attributes. Such a Being also can be equally present at one and the same moment in innumerable myriads of worlds, and to all parts of the universe . . . . .

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The Infinite Spirit is present with every part of his creation, as intimately as the soul of man is present throughout all the parts of that corporeal substance which it animates and sustains. His essence is diffused over all space. He is intimately present with all his creatures, as intimately as they are to themselves, is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts of all intelligent beings, unites himself with the very constitution of their nature. They exist within the grasp of his omnipotence, within the perpetual comprehension of his presence, within the sphere of his energy, and the light of his countenance. "In him they live, and move, and have their being." We frequently speak of God dwelling in the world, by the manifestations of his power and providence; but it

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may with equal truth be said, that the world dwells in God; all creatures being surrounded by his presence, and enclosed in his essence. We cannot for a moment conceive of such a being as separated from any part of the universe, or point of space: all creatures, spiritual and material, subsist in Him who, maintaining his own separate existence distinct from the external world, exercises absolute universal dominion over all the beings he has formed. This particular property of his nature, this peculiar mode of his existence, renders him capable of being the all-comprehending God, of holding in his own hand all the innumerable creatures he has formed.

IV. Because God is a spirit, and not flesh, he is possessed of infinite wisdom and intelligence.

This seems to be a necessary property of that Being, who, himself unbounded and filling all things, must be present to all his creatures at all times, with the same plenitude of perfection as at the first moment of their creation. We cannot conceive for a moment of any interval betwixt him and them, which might exclude them from his view. They must ever be in immediate contact with him, and the objects of his perpetual vision. He is not obliged to change his place in order to observe and take cognizance of them. This presence of God with his creatures being infinite and eternal, his infinite acquaintance with them seems to be a necessary consequence. He that formed all things does not quit any portion of his vast empire when he retires to "the high and

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secret place of his sanctuary:" He needs not to vary his position towards his creatures, in order to obtain a more advantageous situation, or catch the benefit of changing lights, for the purpose of making a more accurate scrutiny of any of them! Every one is as much within his survey at one moment as at another; he is continually present to them, with the same plenitude of power as that which was exerted in their formation out of nothing. Every movement, both of spirit and matter, is performed " in him," and must therefore be immediately within his notice. It is impossible that any thing should elude or escape the light of his countenance, or that any darkness should cover, from his view, those beings which he has created. Hence he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts of all hearts, and the secret springs of all the actions of his rational intelligent creatures. We are obliged to judge of men's character by their actions; he judges of their actions by their motives: we can only trace the streams, and by them judge of the fountain whence they proceed; he penetrates the hidden spring and source: we form a few conjectures of what is passing in man, by the outward exhibitions of his conduct; he, in consequence of the knowledge he possesses of the very constitution of those beings who have been called into existence by his divine power, detects at once the secret springs of all their actions. — " Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh at the heart." He qualifies all our actions by immediate attention

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to the motives whence they proceed: the *motive* is that which determines the action in his sight, and his judgement is always according to truth. "By him actions are weighed." While we are continually liable to be mistaken, and our judgements and censures, often rash and misplaced, are always uncertain; his eye pierces the thickest shades of darkness. The gloom of midnight and the splendour of noon are only distinctions with respect to us; in regard to him, there is no difference: "With him the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to him." There can be no folly therefore so great as for a creature to attempt to conceal himself from the inspection and scrutiny of his Maker. He is within us: "in him we live, and move, and have our being." We need no other proof that he knows the secrets of the heart, than that he is present with its most hidden recesses. Hence, in the Psalm already referred to, the Psalmist infers his infinite cognizance of his creatures, from the fact of his incessant and intimate presence with them. The infinite knowledge which God has of his works, is indeed inseparably connected with this part of his character. As the Infinite Spirit—the great Father of spirits—he is the source of all the intelligence and wisdom which exist in created spirits. He must be perfectly acquainted with all the operations and results of all other minds, since he has constituted them, and they are entirely the effect of his own intelligence and wisdom. When the heathen world lost sight of the spirituality of God, they also lost sight of

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his omniscience; and after gradually sinking lower in proportion as they receded farther from that view of his character, their notions of him became at length so debased that they invested him with a corporeal form. The spirituality of the divine nature, having been attested by the Saviour, and made one of the principles of his religion, has raised the conceptions of the human mind far beyond what the greatest philosophers could previously attain; and enabled children to surpass in both spiritual and intellectual illumination, the sages of pagan antiquity.

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V. The doctrine of the spirituality of the divine nature establishes a most intimate relation between him and all his intelligent creatures: it becomes a bond of the most subtle union between himself and the intellectual part of the creation.

He stands in close and intimate relation to all creatures: their dependence on him is absolute, their subjection to him constant and incessant; but in a special manner is he the Father of spirits. The relation between father and child is very intimate, but that between God and man is much more so. An earthly parent is but the instrument, God is the author of our existence; one is the father of the flesh; the other of the spirit. In proportion as the spirit is the most important part of human nature, this relation which we sustain to God is most essential, interesting, and extensive. The body connects us with the material universe around us; the soul connects us immediately with

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the Deity. At death, the body returns to the earth, its native element; "the spirit returns to God that gave it." The body has a tendency to separate us from God, by the dissimilarity of its nature; the soul, on the contrary, unites us again to him, by means of those principles and faculties which, though infinitely inferior, are of a character congenial with his own. The body is the production of God, the soul is his image. . . . . .

To estrange ourselves from God is therefore to be guilty of a new and most enormous kind of offence: it is forgetting our proper parent;—losing our great portion, the very source of our existence. To love him, to seek union with him in the closest manner possible, is to return to our proper original,—to seek Him from whom all our powers are derived, and by whom alone they can be sustained in time, and must be consummated and completed in eternity. If you were to see a person manifest no desire for the presence of an earthly parent, you would be shocked at the spectacle, and would be ready to represent him as a prodigy of ingratitude. How much more would it affect a well-constituted mind to behold a creature seeking estrangement from his Heavenly Parent—living in forgetfulness of Him. This would appear matter of the greatest astonishment, were men to withdraw themselves from sensible objects, and retire into their own minds, for the purpose of serious reflection. The prophet calls on heaven and earth to sympathize with him in this emotion: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord

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hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."*

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VI. The spirituality of the divine nature renders him capable of the exalted prerogative of being the satisfying portion, the supreme good of all intelligent beings.

It is in consequence of being a spirit, that he is properly fitted to be the Supreme Good; not merely the dispenser of those outward benefits which gratify the corporeal appetites, and sustain our transitory state in this world; not only the author, but the immediate source, the very element of our happiness—in consequence of those properties of his nature which are congenial with our own. Many are willing to acknowledge their dependence on the power and providence of God for those good things the possession of which the world calls happiness, such as riches, honours, pleasures; they expect to be made happy by means of his influence over inferior creatures, exerted in putting things in a train for that purpose. But the devout man ascends to God himself, as the source and spring of happiness, in the contemplation of whom, and in whose friendship and love, consists eternal life: he regards him as the highest good, the source of felicity to the intelligent universe, the very principle of good. The Psalmist recognized the Divine Being under this character, and he has been so recognized by the faithful in every age and every nation; "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul,

* Isaiah i. 2.

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therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."* We find holy men casting their eyes round upon all that is in heaven and on earth .... then collecting all into one great aggregate, and solemnly relinquishing the whole, trampling it in the dust, in order to ascend to God, and rest in his love. "Whom," says the Psalmist, "have I in heaven but *thee*, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee; my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. My soul thirsteth for God, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." To know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, this, this is life eternal. The Divine Being not only sustains towards us the character of a governor, ruling our wills by his holy law, but is also the chief object of our affections; and we never know him aright till we feel thus towards him, till we obey him from the heart, perceiving in him that which is suited to the nature of our immortal minds, and resting in him as our eternal and unchanging portion. If you do not ascend as high as this, you will never find any rest for your soul, you will wander through eternity restless and unsatisfied: "The height will say, It is not in me; and the depth, It is not in me;" and every voice will answer us with scorn unless we listen to that which now issues from the secret presence of the Almighty; "acquaint thyself with *me*, and be at peace." All that we can derive from creatures is

* Lam. iii. 24, 25. Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

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partial, scanty, limited, and precarious; and even that is the effect of his power, the fruit of his munificence: but with Him is the fountain of life, "in his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." He manifests himself to his people, as he does not to the world. The communion they enjoy with the Father of their spirits, forms an essential part of the experience of all real christians. How intimately this is connected with the spirituality of the divine nature will appear, if you consider a few things which naturally arise from a view of the present subject.

1. That which constitutes the felicity of the mind must be something out of it. Whoever retires into his own mind for happiness, will soon find himself miserable; he will feel imprisoned till he is permitted to go forth and unite himself in affection and confidence to something out of himself. Hence those who are most insulated, and cut off from all contact with others, are styled, by way of distinction, *misers*, and are truly the most miserable of men. There cannot be a greater picture of abject wretchedness, than a man, entirely confined to himself, possessing none of those sensibilities which attach mind to mind, and heart to heart,—a stranger to that reciprocation of feeling and affection between kindred minds, which is the very balm of life. But where shall we find, out of ourselves, that which is not, like ourselves, changing, uncertain, and liable to decay, except in God, the Eternal Spirit, who being essentially incorruptible and immortal, is qualified to be the

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everlasting inexhaustible spring of satisfaction to all his intelligent creatures? In fellowship with him may be enjoyed to the uttermost all that is tender and delightful in the emotions which friendship is adapted to inspire, at the same time that in the contemplation of all those great and excellent qualities which elevate and dignify his character, may be awakened the awe which vastness and power are fitted to excite; and both together may well be supposed capable of filling the mind with a calm and peaceful rapture to eternity. If the friendship of a fellow-creature be capable of affording such exquisite delight, how divine a delectation must flow from union of heart with the Deity!

2. He who can always confer happiness on another being must be superior to that being. To be the source of happiness is the highest prerogative, the greatest preeminence, that one being can possess over another; it is, in fact, to be his God. It is plain that we must look higher than ourselves, and trust to the intervention of a power greatly superior to our own, for the source and perpetuity of our happiness. Hence the Psalmist prays: "When my heart is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." The Divine Being possesses this qualification in the highest degree: he is the Infinite Spirit;—to Him alone it belongs to say to any created being, "I will be thy God." . . . . . He only is capable of bestowing and assuring true, permanent, unchanging felicity, at all periods, and through all duration; of doing, in short,

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"exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The earth, in this respect, with all its riches, is indigent; even the splendour of immortality is dark, as to any power capable of guiding man to happiness, independently of the Great Eternal. It belongs to him as the Father of spirits; for he alone possesses that power and dominion over all beings which is necessary in order to render him the portion and happiness of his people.

3. That in which the happiness of a rational and mental creature consists must be congenial to the nature of that creature. The body may be made happy by corporeal objects, adapted to gratify its senses; mind can never be made happy except by mental objects. It rejects with contempt and disdain all sensible delights as its portion. The understanding must be satisfied with the light of truth, or we cannot, as rational creatures, be free from disquietude; the affections must be satisfied in the lovely qualities of character, before the heart can find rest. Where these requisites are wanting, men often languish in the midst of plenty; though surrounded by the means of enjoyment, cast a lingering despairing view around; and sometimes feel disposed to envy those inferior creatures which are placed beneath the level of rationality. But the mental and spiritual excellencies and perfections requisite to constitute the adequate portion of mental and spiritual beings, can only be found in God, who must therefore be the proper good of a thinking creature.

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4. That which forms the principle of our felicity must be something that is capable of communicating itself to us. Creatures solely material are entirely incapable of doing this. Sensual pleasures can never reach our interior nature: they are not sufficiently subtle to constitute the source of delight to the mind; they touch only the grosser elements of our susceptibility, and do not penetrate sufficiently deep to be the proper basis of our enjoyment. But God, as he is a Spirit, is capable of communicating himself to the spirits of his rational creatures. Spirit naturally comes into contact with spirit; and this communication of himself is infinitely easy to the Divine Being. He can manifest himself to the hearts of his people, disclose the glory of his name to them more and more, open perpetually fresh views of his character, give them fresh sensations of ineffable delight in the contemplation of his excellence, lead them forward from one department of his perfections to another, and make the whole creation itself speak forth his praises. Thus may he accumulate the materials of ceaseless rapture to eternity; elevating his worshippers perpetually in adoration, at the same time that he lays them lower in prostration before him. Hence we are taught in the Scriptures to believe that these communications and disclosures of himself by the Deity will constitute the felicity of heaven—this intimate union between the hearts of his creatures and his own essential character, there described as the vision of God, or the intuitive knowledge of him as a Spirit, will

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form the principal ingredient of future happiness. Our Saviour represents himself as the source of this happiness: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."* The apostle Paul, also, speaking of the perfection of the happiness of heaven, describes it as resulting from the immediate sight of the Divine glory. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face; now I know in part, then shall I know even as also I am known."

Even while they continue on earth, it is the privilege of the faithful to enjoy that union and alliance with the Father of spirits, through his Son, by virtue of which they become one spirit. They are, at some favoured seasons, so filled, even to overflowing, with a sense of his love, that the wilderness appears more beautiful than the peopled city. At such seasons, though all the evils that afflict the flesh may attempt to assail the immortal mind, he can be so present to the heart, and impart to the soul such ecstasies of enjoyment, as will more than overpower the violence of pain, and even prevail over the agonies of death.

We now proceed to a brief practical improvement of the subject before us:—

Let us, in contemplating the Divine Being, endeavour to raise ourselves above the association of our minds with what is sensible, visible, and corporeal, and retire within our own nature; not for the purpose of seeking happiness there,

* John xvii. 24.

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but that we may feel our necessity of God, and perceive the demand which the highest powers of our nature make for such a Being, and the impossibility of their finding rest but in his knowledge, obedience, and love. The natural effect of communion with ourselves is to convince us of our own emptiness and nothingness, at the same time that it indicates our native grandeur, inasmuch as there is nothing that can constitute our rational portion but God. In your calmest moments, my brethren, you will find that you possess an understanding capable of contemplating God, and that He only can be an adequate object to engage and employ that understanding, because he is the only being capable of affording to you light, happiness, and life, through a boundless eternity. You possess a conscience, which gives a moral character to all your actions, tinctures with an evil of its own peculiar kind (the evil of guilt) whatever it condemns, and invests with an attribute of moral beauty and rectitude whatever it approves:—whence you will perceive that you never can be happy till conscience is on your side, till the character of your actions and thoughts is such as will bear the review of that inward monitor. To produce this effect is to harmonize a man with his own conscience,—to bring him to be at peace with himself, because at peace with God—to place him on a moral centre, where he can rest self-poised amidst all the fluctuations of the external world. You will find within you susceptibility which recoils from pain and thirsts for pleasures;

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not merely those that are corporeal, in their nature, but also mental and intellectual, such as those which we taste in friendship, and in the contemplation of virtue and truth. Hence you will perceive that you never can be truly and eternally happy till these affections have an adequate object; and that never will be found except in the supreme, eternal, original Spirit. He alone can so communicate himself to you, and give you such a knowledge of his character, and such a sense of his friendship, as will render you in a great measure independent of all earthly objects. You will perceive that he is fitted to be himself the sole and exclusive object of all these powers; you will see the propriety and beauty of that exclamation—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of thee."

Since God is a Spirit, and we are principally distinguished by possessing a rational and immortal nature, there must be an everlasting connexion established between him and us,—either favourable or injurious, of reward or punishment, of mercy or justice,—on which will depend our destiny for ever. There must be a meeting of all finite spirits in the presence of the infinite original Spirit, when an account must be given to God of "the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil." Your happiness must eternally consist in the favour of that Being to whom you are perpetually responsible for all the sentiments of your heart, and all the actions of your life. If you die in a state of disobedience, impenitence, and alienation from God,

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you will incur the doom denounced against those whom our Saviour threatened that if they believed not in him, but rejected his mission and authority, they should die in their sins. A more awful denunciation, who can conceive?—"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; and whither I go, ye cannot come."

The consequence will be, that the Being whom you have neglected and forgotten will be the constant and eternal source of your misery. You will sink under his frown; separation from him will be the great cause of your anguish; you will be vessels of his wrath; you will have fitted yourselves, by contempt of the supreme authority, and alienation from the supreme good, to be for ever in a state of wretchedness, because of separation from Him who is "the fountain of living water."

Since God is a Spirit, and we are unable of ourselves to rise so high as to attain the favour and friendship of such a Being, whose entirely spiritual nature is so subtle that it eludes our unassisted conceptions;—in order that the worship of the true God may be adapted to become the universal religion, Jesus Christ has come down to earth, has assumed human nature, embodied the attributes of God in an incarnate form, and thus taught us the character of the Deity in his own actions. We know the principles of the divine conduct in the government of the world, by the conduct and character of our blessed Saviour in his life. He is "the image of the invisible God," the only representation of Deity: "He that hath seen me," said he,

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"hath seen the Father." The design of his coming into this world was to bring back apostate creatures to his Father; "to make reconciliation for iniquity" by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross; and thus to remove all those impediments which spring from the character of God to acceptance in his sight, and to restore them to the enjoyment of his eternal favour. He gave himself a sacrifice on the altar of justice, that a free passage might be opened to the favour of his heavenly Father without any impeachment of the Divine character; "that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

What movements are in your minds, my brethren, with respect to this great object at this time? Are they stationary, or are they moving in a right or a wrong direction? Are you under the guidance of Christ, seeking increased acquaintance with him, aspiring after higher degrees of resemblance to him, fixing your hopes more firmly upon his promises? Then all things will be favourable to you; "the world, or life, or death, things present, or things to come, all are yours." You have obeyed from the heart the call of the gospel; you have forsaken the world; have become dead to it before you are called to leave it; and have laid up treasure in heaven, having trusted your souls for safety to the Divine Redeemer; "you know whom you have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed unto him until that day." But if your minds are engaged in a contrary direction; if you are seeking happiness in the

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things of this world, living in the neglect of God, never raising your thoughts to the contemplation of the Supreme Good,—if, having rejected the great salvation, you are content to lie under the weight of unacknowledged, and therefore unpardoned, guilt,—yet, bear with me while I remind you that you must have a meeting with God; you must see the face of that Divine Being whose authority you have spurned, and feel the anger of that Divine Redeemer whom you have rejected. You will, if you persist in this course, hear him pronounce the fearful sentence, "Those mine enemies that would not have me to reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me:" "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Blessed be God, there are those now present who are placing their affections habitually on the great Supreme, and uniting themselves, more and more closely, to him by faith in the Son of God. Let such persons rejoice in the prospects before them. The interruptions which arise from your corporeal state will speedily terminate; the flesh shall then no longer lust against the spirit, nor the spirit against the flesh; but you will "do the things that you would." You have preferred the interests of the mind to those of the body; the service of Jesus Christ, and the prospects of eternity, to all sublunary good. You are approaching nearer and nearer to the Chief Good; you are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and you shall certainly be satisfied. God approves your choice, and will assist your infirmities; "he will

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strengthen you with all might by his Spirit in your inner man;" will "work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure;" and enable you to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

"They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; they that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Let us make continual progress in christian virtue. Every act of sin has a tendency to misery. Every effort to subdue corruption, and to live to the will of God, is a seed which, by God's grace, will bring forth fruit to everlasting life. By patient continuance in well doing, let us seek for glory, honour, and immortality; for to such God will assuredly recompense eternal life: but to those that are disobedient, and do not obey the truth, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." "On the wicked he will rain fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."*

II.

THE GLORY OF GOD IN CONCEALING.

PROVERBS XXV. 2.—*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.*†

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, SEPTEMBER, 1826.]

IT is difficult to say whether the glory of God appears more in what he displays, or in what he

* Rom. ii. 7—9; Ps. xi. 6.

† From the Notes of Joshua Wilson, Esq.

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conceals, of his operations and designs. Were he to conceal every thing from our view, it would be impossible that any glory could result to him from the sentiments and actions of his creatures. From entire ignorance nothing could arise, no medium of intercourse could be established between the creature and the Creator. In the total absence of the knowledge of God, religion must be totally excluded and unknown. But it is by a partial communication of himself, which the Divine Being might, if he pleased, in various degrees extend and increase beyond the present measure, that he has in the highest degree consulted his honour and manifested his wisdom. If there were no light, we should sink into a state of irreligious doubt and despair; if there were no darkness, we should be in danger of losing that reverential sense of his infinite majesty so essential to religion, and of impiously supposing that the Almighty is such an one as ourselves. But a temperature of mingled light and obscurity, a combination of discovery and concealment, is calculated to produce the most suitable impressions of the divine excellence on the minds of fallen creatures. When God was pleased to favour his ancient people with a supernatural display of his presence, by a visible symbol, during their journey through the wilderness, it wore this twofold aspect: it was a pillar of cloud and of fire, dark in the daytime and luminous in the night; and when he conducted them through the Red Sea, he turned the bright side of the cloud towards the camp of

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Israel, and the gloomy side towards the Egyptians by whom they were pursued.*

When he descended on Mount Sinai, the token of his presence was a mass of thick and dark clouds, penetrated at intervals by flashes of lightning. On the third day, in the morning, we are informed, there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount; and, it is added, "the mount was altogether in a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace." When Solomon had finished his temple, the manifestation which the Deity made of himself, in taking possession of it and consecrating it to his service, was of the same character. No sooner had the priests gone out of the holy place, than the cloud filled the house of the Lord; and "the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." The first indication of the divine presence was the overspreading of thick darkness, which afterwards subsided, and unfolded itself gradually, till it terminated in an insufferable splendour. Upon observing this, Solomon, at the commencement of his celebrated prayer, used these words: "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness."† If God dwells in light inaccessible, he equally makes darkness his dwelling-place,—"his pavilion dark waters and thick clouds of the sky." "Clouds and darkness,"

* Exod. xiv. 19, 20. † 1 Kings viii. 12.

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says David, "are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." In this view of the character and dispensations of the Almighty, the Psalmist probably alludes to those sensible appearances of his presence which are recorded in his ancient oracles.

At our Saviour's transfiguration, the three disciples retained their composure until *the cloud* appeared; for they knew that to be the symbol of the immediate presence of the Deity. "*They feared,*" we are told, "*when they entered into the cloud;*" and it was thence the voice proceeded, saying, "*This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.*" These representations are in perfect harmony with the doctrine of the passage under our present consideration, in which the wisest of men, speaking by inspiration, informs us that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing." He does it with a design to promote his glory, being by necessity his own ultimate and final end.

There are two observations naturally suggested by these words:—

I. The Divine Being is accustomed to conceal much.

II. In this he acts in a manner worthy of himself, and suited to display his glory.

I. We shall specify some of the instances in which God conceals things.

1. In relation to his own nature and manner of existence.

His essence is altogether hidden from the most profound investigation, the most laborious research,

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the most subtile penetration, of his creatures. With respect to this, it may be said, "Who by searching can find out God; who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" We know that he possesses certain attributes, (which we distinguish by different names drawn from analogous excellencies among men,) exclusive of all limit or imperfection found in human nature. We ascribe to him every idea of virtue and spiritual beauty, exalted to infinite perfection. But how the Divine Being himself exists in an essential and eternal nature of his own, without beginning as well as without end,—how he can be present at the same moment in every point of illimitable space, without excluding any one of his creatures from the room it occupies,—how, unseen, unfelt by all, he can maintain a pervading and intimate acquaintance and contact with all parts and portions of the universe,—how he can be at once all eye, all ear, all presence, all energy, yet interfere with none of the perceptions and actions of his creatures,—this is what equally baffles the mightiest and the meanest intellect; this is the great mystery of the universe, which is at once the most certain and the most incomprehensible of all things;—a truth at once enveloped in a flood of light and an abyss of darkness! Inexplicable itself, it explains all besides: it casts a clearness on every question, accounts for every phenomenon, solves every problem, illuminates every depth, and renders the whole mystery of existence as perfectly simple as it is otherwise perfectly unintelligible, while itself *alone* remains in impenetrable obscurity!

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After displacing every other difficulty, it remains the greatest of all, in solitary, unsurmountable, unapproachable grandeur! So truly "clouds and darkness are round about him." "He maketh darkness his secret habitation; his pavilion to cover him, thick clouds."

His perfections are impressed on the works of nature; but in such a manner that we learn them only by inference. We ascend from effects to causes; from the marks of contrivance and design, to the necessary existence of an Almighty Contriver. But what sort of being he is, and what is the nature of his contact with his creatures, must, in the present state at least, remain an unfathomable mystery. We are utterly at a loss in all such speculations; yet this affords no diminution of the motives of piety. Our belief in the being of a God is the belief of a profound mystery. The very idea of such a Being would appear incredible were it not that it is necessary, because the greatest absurdities would flow from supposing the contrary. Nothing can be accounted for unless we admit the existence of a causeless Cause—a presiding Governor of the universe. We are compelled therefore to choose the less difficulty of the two; or rather, to choose difficulty instead of impossibility, mystery instead of absurdity: and hence we repose on this grand truth.

2. The Divine Being observes the same method of concealment, in a great variety of respects, with regard to the structure and constitution of his *works*. The scenes of nature lie open to our view;

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they solicit our senses, and are adapted to impress themselves in a most lively manner upon our minds. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork." We cannot look around us without beholding, not only the works themselves, but evident traces of that matchless wisdom, power, and goodness, whence they sprang. Still, the mysteries of nature, with regard to the *essences* of things, and indeed to a multitude of subtile *operations*, are kept in a kind of sacred reserve, and elude the utmost efforts of philosophy to surprise them in their concealments and bring them to light. While Philosophy goes on from step to step in the march of her discoveries, it seems as if her grandest result was the conviction how much remains undiscovered; and while nations in a ruder state of science have been ready to repose on their ignorance and error, or to confound familiarity with knowledge, the most enlightened of men have always been the first to perceive and acknowledge the remaining obscurity which hung around them; just as, in the night, the farther a light extends, the wider the surrounding sphere of darkness appears. Hence it has always been observed, that the most profound inquirers into nature have been the most modest and humble. So convinced was Socrates, the chief luminary of the ancient world, of the great obscurity attending all such inquiries, that he abandoned the search of nature, and confined his disquisitions to moral questions, and rules for the conduct of life. The same illustrious man

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declared, that he knew no reason why the oracle of Delphos pronounced him to be the wisest of men, except it was that, being conscious of his ignorance, he was willing to confess that he knew nothing. Newton, the greatest philosopher whom the modern world has known, declared, speaking of a distinguished contemporary from whose genius he augured vast discoveries, but who died in early life, (the celebrated Cotes,) "If that young man had lived, we should have known something." In so modest a manner did he advert to his own imperfect knowledge of that science with which he had attained such prodigious acquaintance as to have become the pride and wonder of the world! Those that have devoted themselves to an investigation of the laws of nature, find, in a great variety of the most common productions, sufficient to engage their inquiries and employ their faculties: they perceive that the meanest work of God is inexhaustible;—contains secrets which the wisdom of man will never be able to penetrate. They are only some of the superficial appearances and sensible properties with which we are familiar. Substances and essences we cannot reach. The secret laws which regulate the operations of nature we cannot unveil. Indeed, we have reason to believe that the most enlarged understanding must, in a very short time, resolve its inquiries into the will of God as the ultimate reason. Thus, one of the best effects of intellectual cultivation, and the acquisition of knowledge, is to restore the mind to that state of natural simplicity and

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surprise in which every thing above, beneath, and around us, appears replete with mystery, and excites those emotions of freshness and astonishment with which the scenes of nature are contemplated during the season of childhood.

3. God is accustomed to conceal much in the dispensations of his providence. The dispensations of the divine providence are that series of actions which the Divine Being is continually carrying on in the government of the world which he has made. This, though it presents many evident marks of wisdom and design, is also eminently endowed with the property of obscurity. "*God is known by the judgments which he executeth.*" The established order of providence in this world makes manifest to every serious and reflecting mind, that "*there is verily a God that judgeth in the earth.*" There exists such a decided connexion between well-doing and happiness on the one hand, and between wickedness and misery on the other, as sufficiently to shew, even independently of revelation, that the Divine Being is the patron of rectitude and the enemy of vice. Yet, while there is a prevailing tendency in virtue to promote happiness, this tendency is not always carried into actual effect. The natural course of things is frequently interrupted and suspended by incidental causes: particular exceptions are continually occurring to the ordinary rule.

There are two respects in which the Divine Being perpetually conceals the ways of his providence.

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(1.) The design for which many events are permitted to take place.

There are many important circumstances and events, the reason of which will probably remain to the end of time altogether inscrutable: such, for instance, as the depression of the righteous; the success of fraud and violence; the frustration of the purposes of benevolence and virtue; the prevalence of persecution; the sufferings of martyrs; the limited diffusion of christianity; the extent to which idolatry has been suffered to desolate the moral world, and the mystery of iniquity to overspread a large portion of Christendom. The best and wisest of men have confessed themselves at a loss to interpret the design of the divine dispensations with respect to themselves and their contemporaries. Even prophets have acknowledged that their minds were for a time perplexed by the anomalies of providence: "Righteous art thou, O Lord," says Jeremiah, "yet let me talk with thee of thy judgements: Wherefore do the wicked prosper?" And David, when he reflected on the prosperity of the wicked, the unequal distribution of good and evil, and the afflictions to which the righteous were exposed, was tempted to exclaim, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain;" nor did he find any satisfaction until he went into the sanctuary of God, and there understood their latter end.

(2.) The Divine Being is accustomed to throw much obscurity over the future. He makes the present the scene of our duty, while he has, in a

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great degree, hidden futurity from our view. "We know not what shall be on the morrow;" we are ignorant of the next event that shall arise, and cannot, with all the light we can gather round us, determine what shall befall us on the next moment: we are impelled forward on the stream of time, but know not what is immediately before us. This ignorance of the future is complete with respect to the period of our own lives. Our existence this moment is no security for its continuance the next: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." It is always a matter of awful uncertainty, when we enter on the business of the day, whether we shall close it in time or eternity; when we compose our eyes to slumber, in which world we shall open them. The future is ever in the hand of God. No man can say with confidence that any one scheme he is pursuing shall be attended with success,—any one hope or fear which he entertains be realized. Every period of our life is opening some fresh page, the contents of which no human sagacity can determine; nor is there a single event that may take place under the sun, which can be known with certainty until it is actually accomplished. God reserves the causes of events in his own hand; and all that the highest wisdom can attain is such a degree of probability as may lay a foundation for distant and uncertain conjecture. He leads nations, as well as individuals, "by a way that they know not." The scenes are shifted and changed by an invisible hand, in such a

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manner as clearly to prove that the collective wisdom of mankind is no more competent to direct their way, than the solitary wisdom of particular persons.

We have had a very striking instance of this, in the change that has recently taken place in the state of this nation;* which has, not by a slow gradation, but in the course of a very few weeks, and almost as it were instantaneously, fallen from the highest elevation to the lowest depression. From a state of unexampled prosperity, when we were exulting in the expectation of still brighter scenes, our prospect has become suddenly clouded with embarrassment, distress, and dismay. Who could anticipate that famine would thus rise out of the midst of plenty; want of subsistence, in the midst of the greatest abundance both of the natural productions of the earth and the artificial productions of human industry? Was there any one of the wise men of the world,—any one of those whose office it is to superintend the affairs of nations, and conduct them as far as finite minds can conduct them,—who formed the slightest conjecture of such a state

* This sermon was delivered in a season of great public calamity. A supposed failure in the crops produced the alarm of famine. The year 1826 was, throughout, extremely unfavourable to trade and manufactures. The number of bankrupts in the first six months had been nearly quadruple the number of the first six months of 1825. Labourers were so inadequately employed, as to render them in great measure dependent on the contributions of the more affluent for the immediate necessaries of life. An unusual "panic" prevailed among commercial men; the *average* depreciation in the value of marketable commodities exceeded 18 per cent.; and all classes were struggling with extraordinary difficulties.—Ed.

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of things? Did any of them foretell it? Had any one presented to his mind the faintest glimpse of the event which God in his providence has brought upon us? No:—the destinies of nations are entirely in *his* hand, and "he doeth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, as well as in the army of heaven." He is pleased, indeed, to give us some glimpse into futurity by establishing a certain order in the dealings of his providence with rational creatures. While this enables us to use means which are adapted to produce certain effects, yet he so frequently frustrates the natural tendency of actions, as to convince us that the course of events is under the control of a superior power. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of understanding." Hence, while encouragement is given to the practice of virtue, by its general tendency to promote our temporal interest and advantage, confidence in our own wisdom and prudence, in neglect of a devout acknowledgement of the hand of God, appears to be the highest presumption. "The foolishness of God" appears, on many occasions, "wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men." Individuals are sometimes defeated and ruined, even by the success of their own precautions; while, on the other hand, temerity and folly are sometimes permitted to accomplish what wisdom could not effect. Exceptions to the success of human effort are so numerous, and the variety of events on which that success depends so complicated, as

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continually to remind us of our absolute dependence on that unseen hand which conducts us whithersoever he will, and accomplishes the whole purpose of his mind, without *giving an account of any of his matters.*

The most important events of human life, on which our happiness greatly depends, are, for the most part, concealed from our view. Very few persons have ascertained, with any degree of accuracy, either the degree or the kind of prosperity and success with which their efforts in pursuit of human felicity have been crowned. The greatest evils which we are called to endure generally take us by surprise, and the most favourable results have been so produced as to render it apparent that they were not entirely the fruit of our own sagacity, providence, or enterprise. There is no event so interesting to us as our departure from this world,—that great change, so comprehensive that it includes every other; yet this, the Divine Being usually conceals. *Man also,* says the author of this book, *knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.** Very few persons die at the precise period which their own imaginations have allotted to that event. Death overtakes most "as a thief in the night." No man is enabled to ascertain at "what hour the Son of man cometh;" and while we are kept

* Eccles. ix. 12.

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in perpetual uncertainty respecting this event, it is the greatest vanity to boast of our foreknowledge of any other, because, when this arrives, our interest in the present world ceases. All that is done under the sun, all the joys and sorrows, successes and disappointments, which take place among men, are then, in regard to us, events that occur in another world. It is true, indeed, that where the bulk of mankind, or great multitudes, are concerned, the calculation of chances respecting their average continuance on earth may be easy and exact: errors on one side are corrected and balanced by those on the opposite; the vibrations of the pendulum being equivalent to its remaining stationary. But to the *individual* the case is altogether different; all inferences in reference to the termination of individual life are vain. No person, therefore, can justify himself in deferring till to-morrow his preparation for that eternal world which may be the first thing that presents itself to his awaking faculties.

4. The Divine Being is pleased to conceal much in the economy of grace and redemption. In the manifestations of his will, even in that dispensation which is intended to afford some knowledge of himself, and of his gracious purposes and designs to the children of men, he maintains the same character, and mingles, in almost equal proportions, obscurity and brightness. Revelation, indeed, by its very nature, is intended to impart information. God has taught us in his word, in the New Testament especially,

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many of the "deep things of God;" and we are under unspeakable obligations for that "*dayspring from on high which has visited us*, to guide our feet into the way of peace, and give knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." Yet the revelation contained in the Scriptures extends only to *facts*, not to the theory of those facts, or their original causes. The most important truths are communicated in a dogmatic, not a theoretic manner. We are taught, on the testimony of Him that cannot lie, insulated facts which we cannot connect with those reasons with which they are undoubtedly connected in the divine mind. They rest solely on the basis of divine authority; and we are left as much in the dark with respect to the mode of their existence as if they were not revealed. He has given us reason to expect that the Godhead subsists in three persons; distinct acts of personal agency being ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while worship and adoration are claimed for all of them: but the theory of this fact is utterly beyond our comprehension; nor does it appear to be any part of the intention of scripture to put us in possession of that theory. Those who have ventured to approach too near this inaccessible light, though with honest and sincere intentions, have for the most part, by attempting to explain it, involved the subject in deeper obscurity, and "darkened counsel by words without knowledge."

We are expressly informed that "the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among men."

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There was a mysterious and inconceivable union betwixt the divine nature of the Son of God, who was "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person" before the world began, and the man, Christ Jesus. But when we attempt to develope this mystery, and inquire how this union was effected and maintained without the two natures being identified, or their respective properties being confounded, we are utterly at a loss. We affirm nothing more than the matter of fact, we only put into other words the express testimony of the inspired writers, without pretending to unfold the mystery of his person, who was Immanuel, God with us. Surely, if we cannot discover how the Divine Being *made* man, it must be far beyond our faculties to comprehend how the Creator of the world *became* a partaker of the nature he had made. This, which has been styled the hypostatical union,—in consequence of which, the blood shed upon the cross, being the blood of God's own Son, possesses that marvellous efficacy, by virtue of which it cleanses from all sin,—will probably for ever remain an impenetrable secret. *Great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.* We are far from suppressing our conviction that this is a great mystery; we rejoice, on the contrary, in its incomprehensibility; we delight to lose ourselves in the impenetrable shades which invest the subject, because in the darkness and cloud which envelope it God dwells. It is the greatness which forms the mystery of the fact,—the matchless love and

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condescension constitute the very nucleus of the difficulty. It could only be brought within the sphere of our comprehension by a contraction of its vast dimensions, by a depression of its native grandeur. A prostration of it to the level of our feeble capacities would only render it incapable of being the magnet of souls, the attraction of hearts, the wonder of the universe. The effect of this great fact on every one who has sufficient humility to believe the word of God, is not at all diminished by its mysterious grandeur. On the contrary, the fact itself is replete with moral influence and practical effect. Could the whole theory of the incarnation be laid open to our view, no additional force would be given to those motives to fervent gratitude and devotedness to the service of our Redeemer, which the mere fact is adapted to inspire. The practical influence is not at all impaired, but rather heightened, by the speculative difficulties which attend it, because they result merely from its ineffable grandeur. The same may be said with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. The distinct parts assigned to the three divine persons, exhibit the beautiful harmony of the plan of redemption: the Father sending his Son, the Son executing his Father's will, the Holy Spirit sanctifying the people of God by dwelling in their hearts. These truths are not less practical, because of the mystery which attends the doctrine. We are as able to adore the grace of the Father, the love of the Son, the communion of the Holy Spirit,—to value the distinct agency

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of the several persons, in the work of our salvation, as if we could perceive the theory of this unspeakable mystery.

With regard to the doctrine of the atonement, we are taught all that it is necessary for us to know; that the blood of Jesus Christ is the price of our redemption, and that it was infinitely worthy of God, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." We can perceive, in some degree, its tendency to advance and maintain the honour of God, as Moral Governor of the world. But many questions may be proposed, with respect to the extent of its efficacy, which our reason cannot penetrate. What connexion this great sacrifice may have with the happiness, what influence on the destiny, of beings of an higher order, of which the Scriptures give some faint intimation, we have no distinct and satisfactory knowledge; but this affords no objection to the testimony they contain, that "for us *men*, and for *our* salvation," the Son of God became incarnate, suffered, and died. It is worthy of the reserve of Infinite Majesty, to give us very brief hints with respect to the influence of these great facts on the innocent and holy part of the creation, to the utmost extent of his dominions.

Again: the operation of the Spirit of God in regeneration and sanctification we acknowledge to be highly mysterious: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it

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goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." All christians indeed know by experience the influence of the Spirit; but what is that mysterious principle, styled grace—how it connects itself with the human mind—where its operations cease, and the operations of the human faculties begin—are questions which probably the wisest of men can no more unfold, than the weakest and most ignorant: they are very far beyond the comprehension of the human understanding. But is it, on this account, less our duty to implore that sacred influence? If it be necessary, as the antidote of our depravity, "if that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit only is Spirit," and, consequently, "except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit,"—of the Spirit operating as water, by cleansing and sanctifying the soul—"he cannot see the kingdom of God;" is his obligation to seek it less, because he cannot explore this mystery? Is the folly of neglecting it more venial, because he cannot penetrate the speculative depths of this doctrine? If any one feels by happy experience that power, by which those who were "dead in trespasses and sins, are quickened, raised up, and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus;" if he feels that "all old things are passed away, and all things become new" within him; that he is braced by a new energy, animated by a new life, expatiates in the world to come as if it were his own; does he feel less gratitude for these mighty operations, because he cannot detect and analyze the power by which

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they have been wrought, or explain the philosophy of divine influence?

These observations may be applied to all the other mysterious facts in christianity, either past or future. The resurrection of the dead must be admitted to be a great mystery, which nothing but the occurrence of the fact can unfold. The apostle puts this question into the mouth of an infidel: "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" which he answers in a very unceremonious manner: "Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." The glorious prospect opened by this doctrine, is not less animating, because it surpasses our comprehension: on the contrary, its profundity only serves to increase our astonishment, and enhance our gratitude. The apostle, in his apology before Felix, resolves the whole into an immediate exertion of divine power: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God *should raise the dead?*" If, indeed, the gospel professed to teach the theory of the fact, it would be a just objection, that this was beyond the grasp of our faculties. If, on the contrary, it merely reveal *facts*, and those facts have immediate practical bearings on the hearts and lives of those who receive them, all objections on account of their mysteriousness are futile, because they proceed on

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the supposition that God intended to develope the whole mystery, whereas he discovers only so much as may be adapted to rectify the conscience and purify the heart.

II. I shall now attempt to shew how the Divine Being promotes his glory, by such a temperature of light and shade as that which distinguishes all his discoveries of himself, and his dispensations towards his creatures.

1. The concealment which he has thrown in these various respects over his ways, works, and word, tends to glorify him, as it is, in part, the necessary consequence of his infinite superiority to all finite beings in wisdom and understanding,—the inevitable result of his being God. His wisdom is that which belongs to him as the Fountain of wisdom, the Father of lights, the Source of all knowledge. His purposes and designs cannot, therefore, be adequately scanned by the wisdom of men, from whom he must necessarily conceal more than he reveals. A child cannot at once be made to comprehend the reasons of his father, in imposing those restraints and privations which are a necessary part of parental discipline. It is only by degrees that his feeble capacity can be made to penetrate the secret of his education. If this be the case with respect to two finite minds, one of which has only arrived at greater maturity than the other, how much more disproportionate must be the plans of Infinite Wisdom to our narrow faculties? and what force does such a consideration give to that appeal of the apostle, "W-

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have had fathers of our flesh that corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?" Surely we owe as much deference to the wisdom, as much reliance on the kindness of the Eternal Parent, as we give to our earthly father! The infinite superiority of the divine perfections renders this concealment necessary. He cannot, on account of his incomparable greatness and excellence, bring his plans and operations within the comprehension of his creatures. Viewing eternity in all its extent, having present to his mind all that is past and all that is future, seeing the end from the beginning, looking forward to the remotest period, and embracing in his prospect all possible future events, he regulates his conduct upon a scale which belongs only to him that inhabits eternity. Concealment is the necessary indication and proof as well as the effect of his being "infinite in council." The judgements of such a Being must, by the necessity of his nature, be, to our limited apprehensions, "a great deep." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!"

2. The glory of God appears in concealing, because it evinces his entire independence on the wisdom, counsel, or cooperation, of any or all of his creatures. It is his prerogative to be the only Being to whom it is always safe to conceal his designs and purposes. It is seldom safe for persons, in the highest stations, to conduct a complicated

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scheme of operations, without taking advantage of counsel: "In the multitude of counsellors," says the wise man, "there is safety." No greater folly can be practised by so weak and frail a being as man, than, in matters of great moment, to decline taking the assistance of other minds. It is the privilege of very few, if any mortals, to possess at once that penetration and that comprehension of view, which would render it expedient for them to tread the most perilous paths alone. He that despises the counsel of others, is, for the most part, sure to rue the effects of his folly. Nor is it necessary that the party consulted should possess superior capacity or even knowledge of the subject in question. Different individuals see the same object in a different light, and a person of weaker intellect, not being immediately concerned, may be much more cool and impartial; some circumstance, therefore, which escaped the attention or the recollection of the most sagacious individual whose passions were excited, may occur to another person possessed of a very inferior degree of intellectual power. Those who are the immediate agents in any plan of operation, have their feelings generally too much excited, are too eagerly engaged in the chase, to be capable of discerning all those possibilities of disappointment and frustration which may present themselves to the calm survey of indifferent spectators. But it is infinitely worthy of the Divine Being, to give no account of any of his matters, with a view to obtain information from his creatures. "Who hath directed the

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Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgement, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."* "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."†

The Divine Being may, with infinite safety and propriety, retire within himself, into the secret recesses of his own essence, the depths of his own immensity, form his purposes apart, consult with none but himself. "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." The resources of his own nature are infinitely sufficient. Of whom should *he* ask light, who is himself the Father of lights? Why should *he* take advice of creatures, of whose wisdom all human knowledge is but a spark? There is not a portion of intelligence in the universe which is not already his own: to consult with his creatures would therefore be but to consult with himself. "There is, indeed, a spirit in man; but it is the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth him understanding." The

* Isaiah xl. 13—15, 17. † Rom. xi. 34—36.

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counsels of God are his own counsels, unmixed with any communication of human wisdom. He cannot mingle his designs with any others, or take associate minds into his cabinet. He needs not to receive back, nor can he receive back from his creatures, any portion of the light which has been diffused from that ocean of wisdom and intelligence which eternally resides in himself.

3. The divine glory is promoted by concealing, inasmuch as such a degree of obscurity as attends the partial manifestation of the divine will, and the progressive developement of the divine purposes, is eminently adapted to the state, exigency, and condition of man. Many important purposes are accomplished by this temperature betwixt concealment and manifestation, as we have already in part shewn, and proceed more clearly to exhibit in a few particulars.

(1.) The prophetic part of the word of God, while it contains some general intimation of future events, is expressed in language, or denoted by imagery, proverbially obscure. This is intended to afford some general knowledge of the future, or it would not be prophecy; but, at the same time, obscurity forms a necessary ingredient. Were it free from that,—were it like the language of narrative,—it would give such a distinct knowledge of the future event as would lead some persons to use means for the purpose of accomplishing it by their own power, and tempt others presumptuously to endeavour to frustrate it. The design of prophecy is not to enable persons to

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anticipate the minute circumstances of events, but partly to excite in their minds a general expectation, by presenting a vague and shadowy outline; partly to afford a striking illustration of the power and providence of God, in bringing to pass those events on the arrival of a distant age. The infinite wisdom of God appears in his foretelling future events in such a manner, that when they arrive, they tally and correspond to the prophecy in a great variety of particulars; while in the mean time the events are so darkly shadowed, that the human agents, by whom they are accomplished, are ignorant that, in so doing, they are, in fact, fulfilling the counsels of heaven. They merely follow the dictates of their own minds, act agreeably to their own inclinations, and have no intention of bringing to pass those events to which the prophecy has reference. Nebuchadnezzar little supposed that he was a mere rod in the hand of Deity, to chastise his own people. Cyrus, when he set out for Babylon to deliver them, little supposed that the hand of God had girded him, and prepared his way before him. Both were unconscious agents in accomplishing the purposes of that Divine Providence whose wisdom enlightened their path, and whose energy sustained them. God had foretold, by his prophets, the rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jewish nation, and his crucifixion; yet the Jews, in delivering him up, as well as Pilate and Herod in condemning and executing him, acted as freely, were therefore as much accountable, as if he

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had not been "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God delivered up."* The treason that was practised by Judas on his Lord and Master, had been announced by the psalmist David; yet how much is the wisdom of God magnified, in permitting this to remain so secret, that the very perpetrator was probably ignorant of it, acting with the same freedom and spontaneity, with as close an adherence to the dictates of his own heart, the peculiarities of his own character, as if no such prophecy had been recorded. Thus God secures the glory of his own foreknowledge, at the same time that he leaves undisturbed the sphere of human agency. Were future events so distinctly predicted as to be clearly foreseen, this would either destroy the proof of divine superintendence and agency, or would require such a perpetual miraculous control over the exercise of human faculties, as would be inconsistent with the state and condition of accountable creatures in a world of probation. It is also necessary that prophecy should not operate as precept; for, with some, the will of God clearly foreseen would have the force of a command, and would be fulfilled as such; which would confound human agency with divine. On the other hand, in consequence of this arrangement, none have it in their power to frustrate his designs: "He frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad;—turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish."† In order, therefore, that the free agency

* Acts ii. 23. † Isaiah xliv. 25.

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of creatures may be preserved, the time, and other circumstances of an event predicted, are permitted to remain so uncertain, that the persons who are to accomplish it continue ignorant of them till the event itself takes place.

Those great events which have materially affected the condition of the world, were foretold by the ancient prophets. But did the human agents know they were fulfilling these predictions? Nothing was farther from their view: "they meant not so, neither did their heart think so;"* they were merely gratifying their own little passions, pursuing no other end than their own sinister and selfish policy. They were instruments in the hands of the Divine Being, as passive in accomplishing his purposes, as the axe or hammer in the hands of a man. The predictions were mingled with much obscurity, as I have before remarked, to leave the free agency of creatures undisturbed, and their accountability consequently unimpaired.

Prophecy is not intended to give men such a knowledge of futurity as to enable even the most sagacious to predict events. Those who have attempted with certainty to assign, beforehand, particular prophecies to particular events, have uniformly failed in their presumptuous endeavours. The design of prophecy is only to afford some general intimation, which may operate either as warning or encouragement. Its chief use is, after the event has taken place, to

* Isaiah x. 7.

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assure men of the universal providence of God, and convince them of that wisdom which foresees all future events, and that power which accomplishes them when the appointed period arrives. When, therefore, the Divine Being has been disposed to lift, in some degree, the veil which conceals futurity, he has only done it so far as to excite a general and indefinite expectation of the event, by exhibiting its general character and features, but by no means to disclose such circumstances of time, place, and instrumentality, as might interfere, in the least degree, with the morality of human actions.

(2.) The Divine Being, by giving no account of the design of many dispensations of his providence, trains us to submission. He is the fit and proper object of trust to mankind. Trust in God is the grand principle of religion; it is another word, indeed, for faith, as that term is applied in the New Testament; the grand principle which distinguishes good men from men of the world. The former trust in God; and, trusting in him, their souls are kept in peace. They commit their way to him, and resign their wills into his hands. God demands from his creatures universal confidence, not only explicit, but also implicit. The former is that which arises from a clear perception of his intentions and designs. When we are able to trace his counsels, our trust in him is regulated by our knowledge of his ways and purposes, and this must precede any exercise of the latter kind of trust. But when the Divine Being has, by such a

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manifestation of himself, by such a degree of illumination, established a conviction of his paternal character, and sufficiently revealed the principles of his government, it is worthy of his majesty to put his rational creatures to the test. Having had innumerable experimental proofs of his loving kindness, and of those tender mercies which are over all his works, should we not be ready to follow him in a path that we cannot discern, even when his footsteps are in the great deep? May not the Father of the universe call on all his rational offspring to place unlimited confidence in himself, to be willing to fall into his hands, to commit all their concerns to his disposal, to abandon themselves to his pleasure? When we consider, also, the provision he has made for our eternal happiness in the economy of redemption, in those exceeding great and precious promises he has there revealed, and especially in the gift of his own Son, the sum and substance of all possible communications of good, how infinitely fit is it for such a creature, having to deal with such a God, to say, with the most entire self-oblivion, "Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight;" joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity, are indifferent to me, since thou canst bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and cause these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, to work for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

(3.) Another advantage derived from this proceeding is, that it tends to promote humility and vigilance, at the same time that it excites to diligence and exertion. As we are to give account

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of our conduct, it is necessary that the Divine Being should afford us a rule of action, and this must be clear and determinate. But it is not necessary that we should be informed of the issue of actions; these, therefore, he is pleased to keep in his own hand. Yet, as without the hope of attaining some advantage, to stimulate us to activity, the mind would become lethargic, because we should feel ourselves chained down by a fatal destiny, in helpless despondency; such a constitution is wisely established, that success may be the general rule, failure the exception. But occasional instances of the latter are useful, by teaching us not to lean to our own understanding. Men are now too much disposed to "sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag;" but if they were capable of certainly foreseeing the issue of their schemes,—if the battle were always to the strong, and riches to men of understanding,—how would the strong man glory in his strength, the rich man in his riches! These objects of pursuit would be the source of most intemperate idolatry, and would utterly corrupt the mind of their possessor, by leading him to glory in himself, and not in God. On the other hand, were there no connexion between the cultivation of certain qualities and success, did no advantage result from the possession of them, there would be no motive to action, no inducement to make those exertions which promote the improvement of mankind, and of the institutions of society. Still, the knowledge that a successful result cannot be calculated

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upon with certainty, greatly tends to stamp vanity on all that relates to the present world, and thus leads men to trust in the living God, whose promises, resting on a certain basis, are secure of their final accomplishment.

With respect to the events that may befall us, especially in reference to that great and final event, death,—were the period perfectly certain, we should be tempted, during the interval, to sit down in the indulgence of security. Such knowledge would induce, in most men, the greatest rashness and presumption. While the event was at a distance, they would gratify their appetites without restraint; they would, upon system, procrastinate attention to their eternal interests. Whereas, now, the uncertainty of its arrival furnishes the highest reason for being always ready, and renders the neglect of preparation the greatest folly and infatuation. It should operate as a solemn admonition from God to perpetual watchfulness and care, not to leave that undone, which, if undone at a dying hour, renders the doing of all other things merely vanity and vexation of spirit, while we are left in a state of inconsolable wretchedness. All pretence for delay being hereby cut off, the inattention of the majority of mankind to these divine warnings becomes utterly inexcusable; especially if we consider the magnitude of the event itself, and that the change it effects in our condition is not only awfully great, but will continue, beyond any possibility of future change, to eternity. Hence our Saviour urges this

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circumstance, as one of the most powerful motives to incessant vigilance. "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. If the good man of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through." "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt, your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the coming of their Lord. Who is that wise and faithful servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing?" God is pleased to deal with us, in the economy of his providence and grace, as creatures that possess reason, and are, therefore, accountable;—that can look forward, and make provision for the exigencies of the future,—and whose great business it is to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." The great necessity which attaches to us, is that of changing worlds; while our life is but a fleeting vapour, liable to be instantly extinguished. That event is perpetually suspended over us, as the inevitable circumstance attending our destiny; but we are in total ignorance of the time of its arrival. We cannot, therefore, without the greatest presumption, call a single moment our own. How is this arrangement adapted to fix and concentrate our attention on the momentous event; to cause it to combine itself with all our plans and counsels! If we are wise, we shall constantly remember our latter end, be always ready, and not suffer that day

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to come upon us like a thief. "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments."

There is another less solemn, yet important view, which may be taken of this point, and equally illustrates the wisdom of God in concealing future events. Were the time of our death foreseen, what a melancholy character would it impart to the pursuits and occupations of the human race! If every man saw the moment of his death continually before him, how would his thoughts be fixed to the fatal spot; and, as it approached nearer, the consideration of it would probably absorb every other. With respect to our fellow-creatures, how would it poison the springs of enjoyment, were parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, able to calculate with certainty the period of each other's lives! We should seem to be walking among the victims of death; the scenes of human existence would lose all cheerfulness, animation, and beauty. The interests of society would also sustain most serious injury. Many great and noble enterprises would never have been begun, could the persons, who in the hope of life engaged in them, have foreseen, that, before they could be concluded, they themselves would be snatched away by the hand of death. Many discoveries, by which great benefit has been conferred on the world, would not have been elicited. Few efforts probably would be made to attain any object, the consequences of which terminate with the life of the party, if he

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foresaw that they would be intercepted by death. Who would build, or engage in any lucrative employment, if he certainly knew that the benefit would not be even partially realised during the term of his mortal existence? But, happily for mankind, events are concealed—duties only are made known. With respect also to calamities which stop short of death, how wisely is it ordered, that, in consequence of their coming upon us by surprise, the courage and fortitude required to encounter them are not weakened by a presentiment of dread! The prospect of them perpetually before our eyes would throw a cloud over the whole path of life, and when they arrived would cause them to fall upon us with supernumerary and redoubled weight. On the other hand, could we foresee our successes, they would lose much of their flavour and relish. The surprise with which they often come upon us is one element of our enjoyment of them.

The future world also has been placed, by the wisdom of God, just in that light in which it is most for our benefit that it should be placed. Were we fixed in the situation of the apostle John, were the heavenly state continually laid open to our view, religion would be no longer a voluntary service; we should be forced to attend to objects so transcendently glorious brought thus near to us. Could we distinctly hear the voices, like mighty thunderings, heard within the vail, they would render us deaf to every earthly sound: religion would be no longer matter of choice; and, consequently, faith would be no longer matter

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of virtue. The preference of present to future interests, and therefore the exercise of self-denial, would be impossible. But the Divine Being has been pleased to throw over the heavenly world a great degree of obscurity. Jesus Christ has indeed brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; has raised our hopes to the highest point, by investing the future state of glory with unspeakable elevation and grandeur; but has not explicitly taught us in what that state will consist:—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We know enough of futurity to make it become the great object of our attention; although it does not so press upon our organs as to render us insensible to present scenes and interests.

4. The glory of God is concerned in concealing much in his character, works, providence, and revelation, because this will probably be a source of great additional happiness to the redeemed, and mingle itself among the elements of devotional enjoyment in the eternal state. A degree of surprise and astonishment, which cannot consist with the perfect comprehension of whatever falls under our cognizance, appears to be one ingredient in the highest degree of felicity of which a rational being is susceptible. There is a principle in the constitution of our nature, which renders us dissatisfied with what we thoroughly understand in all its parts: when there is nothing more to be discovered, from that moment it begins to pall upon us, and we must pass to something which will give scope to the activities of the human mind.

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The Deity is intended to be the everlasting field of the human intellect, as well as the everlasting object of the human heart, the everlasting portion of all holy and happy minds, who are destined to spend a blissful but ever-active eternity in the contemplation of his glory. This can only be effected by his concealing himself. He will for ever remain "The Unknown God." We shall ever be conscious that we know little compared with what remains to be known of him; that our most rapturous and lofty songs fall infinitely short of his excellence. If we stretch our powers to the uttermost, we shall never exhaust his praise, never render him adequate honour, never discharge the full amount of claim which he possesses upon our veneration, obedience, and gratitude. When we have loved him with the greatest fervour, our love will still be cold compared with his title to our devoted attachment. This will render him the continual source of fresh delight to all eternity. His perfection will be an abyss never to be fathomed; there will be depths in his excellence which we shall never be able to penetrate. We shall delight in losing ourselves in his infinity: An unbounded prospect will be extended before us; looking forward through the vista of interminable ages, we shall find a blissful occupation for our faculties, which can never end; while those faculties will retain their vigour unimpaired, flourish in the bloom of perpetual youth; ..... and the full consciousness remain, that the Being whom we contemplate can never be found out

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to perfection ..... that he may always add to the impression of what we know, by throwing a veil of indefinite obscurity over his character. The shades in which he will for ever conceal himself, will have the same tendency to excite our adoring wonder as the effulgence of his glory; the depths in which he will retire from our view, the recesses of his wisdom and power, as the open paths of his manifestation. Were we capable of comprehending the Deity, devotion would not be the sublimest employment to which we can attain. In the contemplation of such a Being, we are in no danger of going beyond our subject; we are conversing with an infinite object ..... in the depths of whose essence and purposes we are for ever lost. This will probably give all the emotions of freshness and astonishment to the raptures of the beatific vision, and add a delightful zest to the devotions of eternity. This will enable the Divine Being to pour in continually fresh accessions of light; to unfold new views of his character, disclose new parts of his perfection, open new mansions in himself, in which the mind will have ample room to expatiate. Thus shall we learn, to eternity, that, so far from exhausting his infinite fulness, there still remain infinite recesses in his nature unexplored—scenes in his counsels, never brought before the view of his creatures; that we know but "parts of his ways;" and that instead of exhausting our theme, we are not even approaching nearer to the comprehension of the Eternal All. It is the

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mysteriousness of God, the inscrutability of his essence, the shade in which he is invested, that will excite those peculiar emotions, which nothing but transcendent perfection and unspeakable grandeur can inspire.

Before I conclude this discourse, permit me to remind you, that while there are many things which God conceals, and thereby advances his glory, he has made manifest whatever is essential for man to know. Whatever is intimately connected with our duty is most plainly taught; whatever is important to our welfare and happiness is fully revealed. Do not for a moment imagine that he has concealed any thing that bears a near relation to your interest. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good." He has distinctly set before you the good and evil of a future life. It is true, you know not the time of your death, but you know that you are mortal; you know not the particulars of what will succeed death, but you know that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and also of the unjust; that they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. Jesus Christ has disclosed in the gospel, as far as they are important for any practical purposes, the realities of eternity; has announced to you his second appearance to raise the dead, and decide the eternal destinies of the human race; to separate between the righteous and the wicked, place every individual of mankind in one of those classes, and divide

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them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. He has told you that he will say to the former, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" and to the latter, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." He has assured you, that those who die in a state of impenitence, unbelief, and alienation from God, will sink into eternal misery; that their doom shall be to go away into everlasting punishment, the portion of the devil and his angels. Those, on the contrary, who are righteous, who are penitent believers, shall be raised in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and then caught up to meet the Lord in the air; afterwards be assessors with him in the judgement; and, at the end of that solemn process, shall enter with him through the gates into the city, and be for ever with the Lord. You are assured, that, immediately after the event of your death has taken place, there will remain no possibility of a change in your condition—that you will take possession of all the horrors of hell, or all the glories of heaven, the moment that the vapour of your life is extinguished in the element of death. He has told you, that you must have to do with Christ, either in the exercise of faith and trust here, or of astonishment and surprise, when you shall lift up your eyes and see, in the person of a neglected Saviour, your offended Sovereign and righteous Judge! "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; they also that pierced him shall wail because of

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him." "Before him shall be gathered all nations." They who have not received his gospel, submitted to his sceptre, cast themselves into the arms of his grace . . . . . shall be banished for ever from his presence. The divine glory is intrusted to him; the destinies of the world are committed to his hands. You have no other resource but to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." He has not only disclosed to you the fact, but also many of the circumstances and appendages of that solemn assize, in which the eternal destinies of all mankind will be determined;—that a great white throne will be spread, and from the face of him that sitteth upon it the heavens and the earth will flee away;—that the books shall be opened, and all men judged out of the things written in those books, "according to their works;"*—that the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; and an eternity of happiness or misery dealt out to every one by his mighty hand, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil;—that the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up; that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat;—that for the abode of the righteous there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;—that in the bottomless

* Rev. xx. 11—13.

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abyss prepared for apostate angels, all the wicked shall be for ever confined.

These are subjects on which the wisdom of man can say nothing, or can utter but the feeble articulations of infancy . . . . . The highest efforts of human sagacity reach not beyond the bounds of time; they cannot pass the threshold of eternity. They are scanty and inadequate, — and leave the world in darkness and misery, compared with these discoveries of revelation. Do not conclude, from the partial obscurity which attends some of its truths, that religion is not the great concern of accountable immortal creatures, or that you will be justified in disregarding such affecting prospects as these. No, my brethren, this obscurity is not such as to hide from you your great interest, to make a right choice doubtful, or render it matter of the least hesitation whether you should serve God or not. God has revealed enough, where the light of the gospel comes, to give men the clearest information concerning their eternal welfare; has set before them life, and has set before them death; has pointed out the broad and the narrow way; shewn them the path of destruction, that they may avoid it— and the way of life, that they may walk in it. Jesus Christ has come to render these things so plain and obvious, that even "wayfaring men, though fools, may not err therein." Though, with respect to the constitution of his person, mysterious as his Divine Father, being "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person;"

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with respect to the practical purpose of his incarnation, the great design of his appearance in human flesh, he is "the Light of the world: whoso followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."† If you are earnest in seeking the salvation of your souls, you have all the evidence you can wish; you are distinctly informed, that a remedy has been provided, exactly suited to your case. Though you are guilty, the blood of Christ can expiate that guilt; though you are polluted, the Spirit of Christ can cleanse from that pollution. The gospel is every way adapted to your wants and misery. It has pleased the Father, that in Christ all fulness should dwell. You are invited to come to him at this moment, to receive out of that fulness all spiritual blessings—pardon, sanctification, and life everlasting. He has given you, in reference to these, "line upon line, precept upon precept." Jesus Christ has become the incarnate wisdom of God. No person now need perish for want of a profound understanding, since the method of salvation has been brought down to the level of the meanest capacity: "Wisdom stands at the corners of the streets, and cries; To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Surely these are the deep things of God, which the Spirit who searcheth all things alone has explored; which the wisdom of the world never knew, the tongue of

* John viii. 12. † John xiv. 6.

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human eloquence never proclaimed, the discoveries of human philosophy never approached: but now they form the very elements of piety, so that the meanest person cannot neglect them without living in a practical defiance of God, and contempt of his authority. He has thrown an air of obscurity over a thousand other things, but not over the things that make for your peace. You are not left in any uncertainty as to the basis of hope towards God. He has clearly taught you what you must do to be saved; how you may draw nigh to God, even to his seat; and through what medium you may pour out your hearts before him. "Behold, he says, I lay in Zion a foundation-stone. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." You know what is that path which will bring you to eternal blessedness; . . . . . that with shame and confusion of face, on account of your past transgressions, you "flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you;" that he may "of God be made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." This is a plain path, open to all. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God;" but these are "things revealed, that belong unto us and to our children for ever."

Among the things fully revealed, is the placability of God, his readiness to receive the chief of sinners who repent of their sins and believe

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the gospel. He stands with open arms to receive returning prodigals. Though he condescends not to reveal the secrets of his wisdom, counsel, and government, he has opened the secrets of his heart, displayed the riches of his compassion and grace. He says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." This is your wisdom; this is your happiness; this is the only way to everlasting life. Let us all apply our hearts and consciences to the plain undeniable declarations of revelation. There will be no excuse for any one who lives a sinful, careless, and worldly life, and refuses to enter into covenant with God by the sacrifice of his Redeemer and to serve him, on account of the obscurity of the doctrine of salvation. That obscurity is not of such a nature as to darken its evidence, or render in the least degree doubtful, any thing that relates to the duties and prospects of accountable immortal creatures. There is no knowledge of any value to you in comparison of this—the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified. You are called upon, by believing in him, to unite yourselves to his promises, and cleave to his unsearchable riches. Have you done this? have you believed in this Saviour, who is the Light of the world? Are you walking in the light; or treasuring up materials of accumulated condemnation, by saying to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,"—though he approaches you, not in the character of a judge, but as the Father of mercies and the God of all

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grace, giving his "only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life?" Let not this be "your condemnation, that light is come into the world, but that you loved darkness rather than light because your deeds are evil." But "walk in the light while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you." Submit to Jesus Christ; be guided by his holy truths and precepts; and you will attain that happiness which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man."

III.

ON THE DUTY, HAPPINESS, AND HONOUR, OF MAINTAINING THE COURSE PRESCRIBED TO US BY PROVIDENCE.

[PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL, MAZE POND, SOUTHWARK, MAY 26, 1811.]

ACTS xiii. 25.—*As John fulfilled his course.**

THE life of every individual may be compared to a river:—rising in obscurity, increasing by the accession of tributary streams, and, after flowing through a longer or shorter distance, losing itself in some common receptacle. The lives of individuals also, like the course of rivers, may be more or less extensive, but will all vanish and disappear in the gulf of eternity.—Whilst a stream is confined

* Printed from the Notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq.

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within its banks, it fertilizes, enriches, and improves, the country through which it passes; but if it deserts its channel, it becomes injurious and destructive, a sort of public nuisance, and, by stagnating in lakes and marshes, its exhalations diffuse pestilence and disease around. Some glide away in obscurity and insignificance; whilst others become celebrated, traverse continents, give names to countries, and assign the boundaries of empires. Some are tranquil and gentle in their course; whilst others, rushing in torrents, dashing over precipices, and tumbling in waterfalls, become objects of terror and dismay. But, however diversified their character, or their direction, all agree in having their course short, limited, and determined: soon they fall into one capacious receptacle; their waters eventually mix in the waves of the ocean. Thus human characters, however various, have one common destiny; their course of action may be greatly diversified, but they all lose themselves in the ocean of eternity.

Few have appeared on the stage of action whose life was more important than that of the great prophet mentioned in my text. His course was a very extraordinary one, distinguished in some sense above all others, our blessed Lord himself only and always excepted. John was called to a very singular work; his ministry formed an epoch in the history of the church. It was the connecting link between the two dispensations. He first preached the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. "The law and the prophets were until

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John: since that time the kingdom of God was preached, and every man pressed into it."

The most extraordinary events began with the baptism of John, and continued until Christ was taken up into heaven. His peculiar office was to announce the Saviour of the world as then present in it: other prophets had spoken of him as *to come;* "*but there standeth,*" says John, "*among you one whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*" He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" and whilst he was actually engaged in his commission, he was able to declare—"*Behold, he standeth among you.*" His commission was high;—to reclaim an apostate people; "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;" "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." His career, too, was extraordinary, and his character and course marked and different from all others. Much of the wisdom of Providence appears in fitting the instrument to the work. The work appointed to John was to reclaim a nation from its departure from God, to rouse a people sunk in insensibility and impenitence, to preach repentance, to proclaim the approach of the kingdom of heaven, to usher in a higher economy, a new dispensation; and for all this he was admirably qualified. He was endued with the spirit and power of Elias. His spirit was undaunted and unyielding; he rebuked the pride of kings. He was indifferent and insensible alike to the charms of pleasure, the allurements of pomp, the smiles of

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power, and the frowns of greatness. His whole soul was concentrated in his object:—he was superior to the world; its forms and fashions made no impression on his mind, and left no traces. He was austere in his manner, abstemious in his food, rustic in his apparel; he partook of the wildness of the wilderness in which he first made his appearance. "He had his raiment of camels' hair, a leathern girdle was about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey." These are lively images of his work. "Then went out unto him Jerusalem and all Judea, and the region round about Jordan; and were baptized of him, confessing their sins."

His ministry finished the legal, and brought in the evangelical, dispensation. His voice was like the strong wind that bloweth—the whirlwind that maketh the earth to quake—the loud blast of that trumpet which was to wake the nations — the earthquake and the whirlwind which immediately preceded "the still small voice." His career was brilliant, and his success extraordinary. A large portion of the Jews became his converts, at least for a time: even the Scribes and Pharisees listened to him. "He was a burning and a shining light:" the apostles themselves were many of them first his disciples, and received from him those instructions which prepared them for the coming of the Messiah. By the authentic historian, Josephus, he is spoken of in terms of the highest encomium. It is remarkable, above all, that he was the only prophet born of woman, who was himself the subject of prophecy.

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As his course was short, so was his end violent and tragical. He fell a martyr to his fidelity, and the artifices of an intriguing woman. Having rebuked Herod on account of his incestuous intercourse with his brother's wife, he was sacrificed to her resentment. He disappeared soon: his course was hurried and impetuous; eager, as it were, to reach his destination, and to mingle his grand soul with its kindred elements in eternity. He was raised up for a particular service; and when that was accomplished, he was removed. He was not *the* light, but the harbinger of that light, the morning star that was to usher in the Sun of Righteousness. "He bore witness of the light, but he was not that light;" and no sooner did that light appear than he was withdrawn, that nothing might divide the great homage due to the Saviour, according to his own prediction—"He must increase, but I must decrease."

Having, perhaps, already detained you too long in contemplating the character and conduct of John the Baptist, I shall occupy what remains of our time, in illustrating and inculcating two or three practical observations, founded on the words of the text.

I. That there is a prescribed course or sphere of action, appointed to every individual by the Author of our nature.

We are not a race of independent creatures abandoned to live without control; we are not sent into the world to follow the dictates of our own will. We cannot commit a greater mistake

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than to suppose that we are in any sense *our own;* we belong to another: even our limbs and faculties do not so much belong to ourselves, as we do to our Maker. To do his will, to conform to his pleasure, to keep his commandments, to fulfil his designs, to serve the end of his government, and to promote his glory; these are the great ends of our existence; and to attain them ought to be the fundamental law of our being: otherwise we live in vain, worse than in vain; and it would have been better for us never to have had an existence.

There is one great principle of a holy life, which is one and the same in all who live as they ought; and that is, conforming ourselves to the will of God, complying with his plan, doing every thing to please and glorify him. Thus our Saviour himself when in this world was devoted to his Father's will; this was his object constantly, even when observed by those around him. It cannot be better exemplified than in that beautiful saying of his, when he was requested to take refreshment at the well of Jacob—"I have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of; my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work:" and it is doing the will of God from the heart, which implies a careful attention to all the manifestations of it, and a reverential regard to all the discoveries of it, with a fixed and determined resolution to comply with it whenever and wherever it is known. This, as I said, is the end of our existence, the business of our life; and we live to no purpose, or to a bad one, but as we conform to it. But, although this is

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the universal principle by which all are to be actuated and guided, yet it admits of great and numerous variations in its practical application. The principle is the same; but when it comes to be acted upon by individuals, and embodied in the experience and conduct of men in the several conditions of life, it gives birth to an endless diversity. To do the will of God, and to promote his glory, is the proper object and end of all: but the manner in which an apostle, for instance, was called upon to do this, is not that in which an ordinary teacher is to do it; nor the manner of an ordinary teacher that of a private christian. The duties of a sovereign are extremely different from those of his ministers and officers of state; and those again, from the duties of inferior magistrates; and of magistrates, from those of private subjects. Of the rich it is required to do good and to communicate, to sustain the cause of God and truth in the world, to support public institutions of a charitable and beneficial nature, and freely to distribute of their abundance to the necessities of their fellow-creatures; of the poor, to be prudent, diligent, careful; and so on.

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Thus the several conditions and relations of individuals have their respective duties, in which they are to do the will of God, in "*fulfilling their course;*" but in each and all, the same care and attention ought to be maintained, to the one grand principle of which we have been speaking: one

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spirit should animate the whole;—one great end, under whatever variety of form and mode.

In the principles of human nature, and in the powers and faculties of our bodies and senses, there is a general agreement: yet no two individuals of the human race are alike; and the same variety exists in moral arrangements. In the elements which compose the principle of holiness, the essential ingredients are the same; but when they come to be applied and embodied in a right course of action, they often seem widely different. Although the end is the same in all, yet the manner in which this end is viewed will be various: the rays of light when blended in day, are simple and of a uniform colour; but when they are refracted through a prism, they exhibit all the colours of the rainbow. Such, my brethren, are the principles of holiness, and their diversified action in individuals: but, I repeat it, it is doing the will of God in all;—this, this is the object, the grand vital principle, that animates good men in all ages, in all circumstances, of all classes and denominations. This is the true catholic spirit, which unites all the members of the true church; and in proportion as men live well, and live for eternity, this is the ruling and governing principle,—to glorify God.

II. We observe that there is a set and limited time allotted to that sphere and course of action: "There is an appointed time to man upon earth." The course of man is not indeterminate, but has its limits, and they are narrow: "Man that is born

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of a woman, hath but a short time." If we had not the testimony of scripture on this point, it would be reasonable to conclude, from our observation of nature and the world around us, that the termination of human life is not left in uncertainty, but that it is directed by the wisdom of Him who himself is the Author of existence. If "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his knowledge," much less can the death of a human creature take place without his interposition. Whether we fall premature victims to disease, or perish by what men call accident, or sink under the burdens of age, still it is according to the will of God, "whose counsels shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure."

This course is not only limited, but it is short. It is but a little time that we spend on earth: "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and my years are as nothing before thee." Whether we drop in infancy, from the cradle to the grave, or are cut off in youth; whether we attain to manhood, or even to old age; still we soon arrive at the boundary, we soon reach the end of our course, and often without passing through its intermediate stages. "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee!"

The stream of human existence is rapid and impetuous; its waves follow each other in quick succession, and many are ingulfed almost as soon as they appear. Early in infancy the stream glides away like a summer brook, and leaves the fond

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parent mournfully to recall the pleasure he received in contemplating its unsullied purity and its playful meanders. Of those who set out with us in this journey of life, how many have disappeared from our side! what changes have taken place in the circle of our connexions since we began our course! how few can we now number of those with whom, in the earlier period of our lives, "we took sweet counsel!" Every year makes great changes. How great are the changes, my brethren, which have been made in the face of *this* congregation! Where are many of our friends in whom we delighted? They have finished their course; they have passed through the gate that opens into the invisible world; they have completed their probation, and appeared at the tribunal of Infinite Majesty; they have done with the converse of mortals, and have seen and heard things which it is impossible to utter; they have for ever finished their course.

III. Our happiness and our honour consist entirely in completing the course which God has assigned to us. In filling up the sphere of action which he has prescribed, and which his providence has marked out to us, there are two great mistakes into which we are liable to fall, in our views of this subject.

1. That there is some other happiness and honour than that which is to be found in fulfilling our course, or, in other words, occupying that sphere of duty which God hath been pleased to assign us. Some are looking for their satisfaction

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to the pleasures of sin; others to the gratification which the world affords; some attach their notion of happiness to some external situation not yet found, and imagine it is to be met with there. Settle it in your minds, my dear friends, that the only happiness worth seeking,—that which will live in all circumstances, and abide the vicissitudes of life,—our only real and proper good,—consists in *fulfilling our course*, conforming to the divine will, imitating the divine perfections, obeying God's commands, walking in the light of his countenance, and being at peace with him. The prescription of this as the way to happiness, is amongst the fixed laws of our nature: it is "founded amongst the floods, deeper than the foundations of the everlasting mountains." It forms a part of the constitution of heaven itself. It was amongst the original decrees promulgated by God in the silence of the universe. Eternal truth has declared, that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding." Could you ask the children of men, one by one, at the verge of life,—and especially those who have passed into eternity,—from the very commencement of time, whether they have been happy, and what constituted their happiness, there is not one who would not confess that the fear of the Lord was the only wisdom, and the knowledge of the Most High the supreme good.

If you could find another species of happiness, it would be what the wisdom of man has not yet discovered. You must look into some corner of

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the world which the eye of Omniscience has not penetrated; you must defy Omnipotence, and give the lie to eternal truth. "Where," says the Almighty, "is the place of wisdom?" All creatures testify that it is not in them. But God declares, "The fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom."

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Accursed be that impiety, shut out from the universe be the shadow of that conception, which would represent happiness to be found in the depths, the heights, the breadths, or in any thing separate from the service, the knowledge, and the love of the Eternal Being. This, "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This fountain of water flows for the refreshment of the meanest peasant, as well as of the greatest monarch; this is an universal school of wisdom, into which all are invited. You may be happy, but there is but one way, and that is "fulfilling your course," consulting the will of God, commending yourself to the guidance of his wisdom in a life of religion, living not to yourselves but unto God, seeking satisfaction in the mortification of every inclination which crosses his everlasting purposes: you may even lose your life for his sake, and you will find it.

2. The second mistake against which we should guard you, is that of supposing we should be able to conform ourselves to the will of God, and to our own sphere of action, better in some other

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state; and being therefore dissatisfied with that precise state in which his providence has placed us. The wisdom of each consists in fulfilling his *own* course. The course of John the Baptist was difficult, obstructed with afflictions, and beset with dangers: but he fulfilled it. How many objections might he have formed against the precise course assigned him! how many reasons might he have advanced for supposing that in some other sphere he might have glorified God more entirely! But he yielded himself to the wisdom of God.

Some are ready to suppose that they should more easily comply with the dictates of religion, and more easily surmount temptations, in a condition different from their own; that they should have acted better in another combination of circumstances; and thus venture, if I may so speak, to lay the blame of their defection and misconduct upon God, who has fixed the bounds of their habitation.

The poor may easily imagine, how amiably and liberally they should have acted if their lot had been cast among the rich; and the rich, on the other hand, how safely they should have been preserved from a variety of snares, if they had been screened by the privacy of the poor. The young will ascribe their errors to the impetuosity so natural to their age; those who are more advanced are ready to imagine that if they enjoyed more leisure, and were not so entangled with the cares and perplexities of their active station, they should be better able to attend to the concerns of

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a future life. The aged are wishing for the energy and capacity of attention which belongs to youth: their time, they plead, is passed; it is too late for them to change.

But all these are great mistakes. Our true happiness is to be found in fulfilling our present course, conforming ourselves to the duties of that station in which we are placed, in consulting the will of God under the circumstances in which we actually are, and improving the opportunity which our condition affords. If we do not *now* love and fear the Supreme Being,—if we cannot *now* resist temptation, mortify corruption, and devote ourselves to the service of God,—if we *now* feel no resolution "to run the race that is set before us,"—we may be assured that a change of circumstances will not avail. It is not a change of state that we want, but a change of heart: the disease is within, in the state of our minds, the bent of our dispositions, which will follow us into another situation, produce the same effects, and place us at the same distance from happiness. What you want, my brethren, and what we all want, is the renovating principle of divine grace, that sanctifying principle within us; to have the law of God written in our hearts, without which no other change will avail. The grace of God in the heart will preserve us in any and every situation, and in all circumstances will be fruitful of advantage to our souls: it will guide us and keep us humble in prosperity, cheer us in adversity, and render its discipline salutary; it will sustain and direct us

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in life, support us in death, and go with us into eternity. It was this that enabled Joseph to preserve his chastity in the midst of temptation; that supported Daniel in the very jaws of lions; and inspired the confidence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in "the flaming fiery furnace." This is the principle which brings God to our view in seasons of the greatest trial, by piercing the cloud of flesh, and enabling us to see him that is invisible to the eyes of sense. The man who possesses this principle will adorn an elevated condition, with humility; and a condition of obscurity and poverty, with integrity and resignation.

If, therefore, there be any persons in this assembly that feel a conviction of the importance of a religious life, and a course of right actions, but yet are sensible of a moral inability, let them have recourse to the fountain of divine grace. Come to Him who is eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame. Cast yourselves at the feet of the Saviour; be conscious of your weakness, misery, and guilt. Pray to Him who is the fountain of all light, that the beams of his grace may be communicated to you; that his light may shine into your hearts, to give unto you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

This will govern the heart as well as guide the understanding, direct the will, and regulate the affections: this will make you holy; this will subdue temptation; this will be an antidote against the infection of evil examples. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; for

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who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" This will surmount the disorders of life, the fear of death, and conduct the soul to everlasting felicity.

Finally, my brethren, let each of us attach himself with more seriousness, alacrity, and fervour than ever, to the proper duties of his station; let each consider in what instances he fails to fulfil his course; let each examine himself, and see wherein he fails to observe "the good and perfect law of God." Let him discover "his easily besetting sin," and see how far this has perverted his course, and turned his affections from God.

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The time is coming when you will perceive that there is no true wisdom to be found but in doing the will of God. The value of *time* is to be estimated by the opportunity which it gives us of laying up riches for *eternity*. He is the most steady pursuer of his own interest who has "laid up treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Some of you, perhaps, have not even begun: you have done nothing yet for the glory of God; you have been living entirely to yourselves; and your lives, it may be, are approaching to a close. Begin then to be wise; reflect on what you have heard; and remember, it will be ratified by the impressions of a dying hour.

There are some present, perhaps, who are near to the end of their course, and have the satisfaction

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to reflect that they have had their conversation with God. Happy such persons, whatever their station in life may be! Let the consideration of your having so nearly fulfilled your course, make you more diligent and circumspect in what remains of it. In a very short time your conflict will be over, your corruptions will be slain. So near to victory, do not let the weapons of warfare fall out of your hands: "Be faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life."

The memory of John the Baptist is perpetuated with honour, because he "fulfilled his course;" while that of Herod and Pontius Pilate are covered with infamy. Which of these characters will you imitate? Will you be among those whom God condescends to honour, to whom he will say, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord?" or will you now surround yourselves with a few sparks of worldly pleasure, and lie down in eternal darkness?

Whenever the gospel is preached, this alternative is set before you: the alternative of "shining like the sun for ever; or of awaking to shame and everlasting contempt." If there were no judgement-seat at which we must appear, we might have our election between peace of conscience, and the gratification of our desires. But our course here is a preparation for our course hereafter. Never dissever in your minds a life of piety and a life of honour; there is no glory, no happiness, but in the love and service of God.

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Hear the language of the apostle Paul, in the near prospect of a violent death: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Do you believe this? If you do not, you are not christians; you wear a mask. But if you do, the conviction and confession of this truth will for ever be a source of torment to you, unless you now imitate the conduct of this apostle, give yourselves up to God, and embrace and pursue a holy and religious life in Christ Jesus.

IV.

CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENCE, CONDESCENSION, AND EXALTATION.

[PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL IN DEAN-STREET, SOUTHWARK, JUNE 27, 1813.]

PHILIP. ii. 5—9.—*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.**

IN this chapter, it is manifest from the context that the apostle is inculcating upon professors of

* From the notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq., corrected, in a few cases, by comparison with the notes sent by six other friends. See Mr. Hall's own sketch of the argument, Vol. V. pp. 22—30. —ED.

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the gospel a spirit of condescension and humility. "Let nothing," saith he, "be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself: look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

His intention is to enforce a disposition that enters very deeply into the lowly spirit of the gospel, an attention to the circumstances of others, a preference of their interests to our own, and a willingness to condescend to make great sacrifices of our own interest and gratification, of our own honour and advantage, to promote their good. It is that particular species of christian virtue and benevolence, which stands opposed to the tenacious maintenance of outward distinctions and dignities that insists on all the honour and pre-eminence which we might be supposed to have a right to claim; and lays by its own advantage and honour for the sake of promoting the spiritual and temporal interests of our fellow-creatures, and especially of our fellow-christians.

Of this disposition he presents a striking example in the noble conduct of our Saviour, and in the great doctrines which are exhibited in his incarnation and converse in this world, as well as in the wonderful example of love and humility which he shewed in becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and he shews that by such a conduct as this it was that Jesus Christ rose in our nature to that inexpressible majesty with which he is at present invested. "Wherefore God also

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hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Permit me to request your attention while I endeavour to set forth, in some imperfect measure, that example of great condescension and humility which is exhibited in the passage before us.

Now, in the idea of condescension, we must suppose a superior and an inferior,—one by whom that virtue is exercised, and another to whom it is shewn. Where there is a perfect equality, there is no room for the exercise of this particular species of virtue; much less where a superior only is in question: for, though we may behave ourselves with the utmost propriety towards an equal or a superior, yet it is impossible that he should be the object of our condescension; this would involve a very great absurdity in language.

Whenever we speak of this species of excellency, it always implies that it is an inferior towards whom it is exerted; this is the necessary prerequisite for the exercise of this particular form of christian and moral virtue. In like manner it is evident that a stoop, a descent from some dignity or previous elevation, is always supposed in the exercise of this branch of virtue. It always implies a resignation of some claim to a superior station, a foregoing of some advantage or preeminence. It is also necessary that such humiliation should be perfectly

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voluntary; a voluntary lowering of ourselves beneath the station which was previously occupied; a laying down of some advantage or dignity. There is a strong contrast supposed in a series of acts of condescension, or even in one, between the station we previously occupied and that in which we place ourselves. There is also an implied opposition between something we possess and something we resign, and the station to which we are reduced in consequence of resigning it,—the station to which we bring ourselves,—which forms a powerful opposition or contrast to what we might have assumed or previously possessed.

If our Saviour condescended, in the instance before us, it is manifest there must have been some previous elevation from which he descended—from which he passed to those acts which are here specified. It is necessary, in order to make out an example from our Saviour's case, to specify the particular circumstances here implied, which stand opposed to other circumstances: the elevation must come first, and the voluntary depression of himself must come afterwards. This is implied in the very nature of things. In all acts of condescension we must suppose the person who performs them to be acting in a manner perfectly voluntary; there must be no degradation in the case, nor any thing that occurs by what we call chance or accident, nor yet the usual arrangements of Providence: nothing that thus occurs can give any scope to the exercise of this disposition. Though the manner in which that depression may be borne may evince

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much patience and equanimity, and much of the proper spirit of christian resignation to the divine will, yet it cannot be called an act of condescension, if it is to be traced to the irresistible operations of divine grace, and much less still if it is the inevitable consequence of an irresistible law of nature. No one ever thought of praising the greatest sovereign on earth on the ground of his condescension in being a man, though this places him in the most essential particulars on a level with his subjects; a participation of human nature being a greater instance of equality than any circumstance that can produce inequality. No one, I say, would think of praising him on that account, because it is an effect of a law under which he was born, and which excludes his choice and volition.

But, not only is every instance of condescension supposed to involve the exercise of choice; but there must be no very forcible obligation, no such strong and palpable obligation to the act that expresses the condescension, as that the contrary of it would shock our moral feelings, would appear exceedingly unbecoming, and excite a great degree of moral disapprobation. Though condescension be a great ornament to the character of a christian, and springs from the principles of his religion, it is of a very different nature from the obligations of justice or even of humanity. It is of such a nature, indeed, that it is always supposed the not exercising it would not at the same time have destroyed all claim to virtuous and honourable conduct. If there be a forcible obligation to such sort of

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conduct, that conduct can never be entitled to the praise of eminent condescension. For example, nothing can be more plain than that it is the duty of every man to exercise humanity and strict justice towards all with whom he has to do. But, as the obligations to humanity, in cases of extreme distress, are very forcible and strong, the neglect of them lays a person open to great blame; and the practice of them, in some instances, in proportion to their great obligation, deprives the conduct of the title to high praise and commendation. In all cases the more palpable the obligation to conduct is, the less is there praiseworthy in complying with that obligation; and, on the other hand, the fainter the previous obligation is supposed to be, the stronger is the instance of virtue from attending to so comparatively feeble a sense of obligation.

Now, it is manifest, that if our Saviour be proposed as a pattern, it must be in some instance wonderfully condescending and humble, different from what might have been expected; that we must not merely look for what is virtuous and worthy, but for that which is so extraordinary and singular as to justify his being exhibited, in this part of his conduct, as our example. If he be proposed as an imitable model of condescension, it must be for the exercise of this virtue in a very eminent and extraordinary degree; for nothing else can justify his being held up as a pattern to all ages. If, while it was imitable in its kind, it had not surpassed all comparison in degree, it would then have excited a vicious competition,—it would

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have contradicted the very purpose for which it was produced, which was to set our Saviour inexpressibly high in our esteem, and excite us to emulate his conduct, as far as we are able, with the most entire consciousness that we can only make an imperfect approach to it. We must look, then, for some very extraordinary instance of condescension in our Lord, something which must strike all eyes, something which cannot be accounted for without supposing inexpressible love in the breast of the Saviour, and such an infinite compassion towards a lost world as must place him beyond all comparison, or even the power of being imitated, in this respect.

Now, there are two ways of interpreting this passage of scripture; and these remarks have been made to enable us to judge which is the best interpretation, which best corresponds with the intention of the sacred writer. If there be any doubt about the meaning of the text separately taken, and it is capable of two distinct interpretations, that must be allowed to be the just one which best corresponds with the purpose for which the passage is produced; that which furnishes the argument for which the passage is brought, that which most illustrates the particular moral duty intended to be inculcated, must be confessed to be the true one, in opposition to that which does not inculcate that duty. It is allowed that an attention to the scope of a passage, and a consideration of the purpose for which it was written, is one of the most certain guides.

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In interpreting this passage, and in determining which is to be preferred of contrary interpretations, you must consider, not merely what meaning the words may bear, but which of the meanings proposed best corresponds with the intention of the inspired writer, by exhibiting our Saviour as a marvellous example of condescension. If there be a capacity of putting another construction on the words without any great force or violence to them, which, at the same time, does not exhibit a striking example of condescension,—one which deprives our Saviour of the place he here occupies as a pattern, on the supposition of which it becomes difficult to conceive of any condescension at all remarkable,—we are justified in setting aside that interpretation; not simply because it appears less natural in itself, but because it is quite unsuitable to the place, by destroying and invalidating the purpose for which it is brought.

I shall briefly propose to you the opposite interpretations which have been given to the passage before us.

First, then, let us take that of those who deny the divinity of Christ and the incarnation, and, of consequence, all the doctrines connected with them: their interpretation is as follows. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God;" that is, say they, being possessed of extraordinary miraculous powers, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" which they interpret, whether justly or not I shall not now inquire, *did not eagerly catch at, or was not*

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eager to maintain the idea of any likeness to God, or equality with God,—"but made himself of no reputation;" that is, say they, made himself poor, or reduced himself to a state of poverty and meanness;—"and took upon him the form of a servant," which word they interpret *slave*, because, if the term servant stood, it is plain there could be no instance of condescension; they therefore consider him as subjecting himself to the abject state of a slave;—"and was made in the likeness of man," which, say they, is like common men, not distinguishing himself by outward distinctions, but placing himself on a level with the meanest part of mankind;—"and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now this is the interpretation of those who would set aside the pre-existence of Christ in a state of majesty previously to his entrance into our world, and the obvious argument that hence results in favour of condescension from the preeminent dignity and glory of the Saviour. But let us consider whether this interpretation can possibly stand, consistently with the prerequisites we have before mentioned; whether the instances here adduced can possibly exhibit any striking example of condescension on the part of the Saviour. "Being in the form of God," on the supposition of its meaning his being possessed of miraculous powers, must be the only elevation he possessed above common men. This was his great distinction; but *this* he never laid aside. Here, therefore, instead of his conduct

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exhibiting a great example of condescension, the station he occupied he never came down from; he never lost it for a moment; for the exercise of miraculous powers continued, through the whole of his ministry, with increasing splendour and advantage. With respect to the translation I have adverted to, and which I shall not now combat, because the requisite criticisms appear to me very unfit for a popular assembly; let us take it that he did not eagerly catch at, or was not eager to maintain, his equality and likeness to God, still I affirm that this is not an instance of *condescension*, because there is upon creatures a forcible obligation not to contend for equality with God: and although it would be extremely criminal not to comply with it, yet there can be no high degree of virtue in abstaining from so atrocious a degree of guilt. For a subject to refrain from assuming the dignity of sovereign would excite no admiration; no one would think of highly praising his virtue because he did not raise a standard of rebellion against his sovereign. In proportion to the force of the obligation to abstain from such pretensions, in the same degree is such conduct considered only in a negative way; that is, as exempted from censure, but not entitled highly to praise; in some cases, indeed, not at all. But the apostle brings it as a proof of condescension and humility, that Christ Jesus did not eagerly affect, as they say, an equality with God, or did not *catch at it.* How can that be an instance of *condescension?* The example must surpass, I apprehend, all human

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comprehension. "But made himself of no reputation," or, as the expression literally is, *emptied himself.* Emptied himself of what? And, it is added, "took upon him the form of a servant." We might suppose that his emptying himself must mean his divesting himself, as the expression signifies, of something before possessed, of some distinction and glory before mentioned; and the only one, even in the esteem of our adversaries, is the form of God: but, upon their supposition, he did not empty himself of it at all; he retained it; for, during his whole ministry, he exercised miraculous powers, and never more so than in the resurrection of Lazarus, which immediately preceded and accelerated his death. But, the text says, "he made himself of no reputation:" you may suppose that the writer is going to tell us for what reason he took upon himself the form of a servant. Here, the "form of God" being mentioned before, it is manifest that the "form of a servant" is the intended antithesis. But, upon the supposition of Jesus Christ having no existence before he came into our world, there can be no interpretation given to it, unless we interpret *servant, slave,* and suppose that he degraded himself to the service of a common slave. But, if Jesus Christ acted the part of a slave, or sustained the character of a slave, it must be either in relation to God, or to man. With respect to men, it is manifest he did not act the part of a slave, he never sustained that capacity at all, much less took upon him that character permanently; he never was in captivity: it was not then his relation to society.

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With respect to his heavenly Father, it cannot be supposed that it can be applied to his service to God; nothing can be so absurd: no service which the Divine Being can be supposed to prescribe to an accountable creature, can be viewed in a degrading light. And where is there any example of the term slave signifying a very mean servant of God? Are not the angels themselves styled the servants of God? Does not Paul call himself the servant of God? Does not the angel in the Apocalypse style himself the fellow-servant of John? Would our very adversaries themselves so exceedingly disfigure the language of scripture, as to style these the *slaves* of God? What can it then be for, but to answer a purpose perfectly palpable, without being at the same time able to assign any just and proper meaning to the term? "And was made in the likeness of men:" here it is represented as an act of great condescension in our Saviour that he was made in the likeness of men; but how could he assume any other appearance than that of a man? how could he fail to appear in that character, with no other attribute belonging to him than that of a human being? "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now, these expressions evidently are intended to introduce a proof of our Saviour's great condescension and humility; but none of them answer this purpose in the least degree, but on the supposition of there being some previous dignity or rank from which he descended. There is no

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contrast, on the supposition of mere humanity, between this and the previous state; there is no forcible, or palpable, opposition between what he became and what he was: he always *was* a servant, he always *was* in the likeness of man, could be nothing but man; and yet his being so is represented as a marvellous instance of condescension and humility in the Redeemer! On the supposition that Jesus Christ did not exist before he came into our world, the order of things is inverted; for the dignity of our Saviour, his elevation, came *afterwards*, upon this supposition, and his depression came *first*: he had no elevation of an earthly kind at all from which he could condescend, and he is the greatest example, if he were no more than man, of a person raising himself to great dignity and authority from the meanest and most abject beginning. No "form of God" was perceived in him in the commencement of his ministry. He possessed miraculous powers, it is true; but he possessed them to the end, and these he never lost. "My Father worketh, and I work." Upon the supposition of his mere humanity, the contrast is of a different kind: he is the most wonderful example of a person rising from the most obscure beginning, commencing in lowly circumstances, and ascending to grandeur.

But if we take the expressions according to their obvious and popular import, they afford the most striking illustration of the purpose of the apostle in exhibiting the condescension and humility of the Saviour. "Who, being in the form of God, thought

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it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Here the form of God and the form of a servant are contrasted with each other; and as the form of a servant is universally understood as acknowledging that he was a servant, what can we suppose the being in the form of God to mean, but that he was God; though that may not be its only meaning? He is said to have taken upon himself the form of a servant: here try the meaning of those who oppose the divinity of Christ, that he was not eager to catch at or to retain the likeness of God; and then, upon the supposition of his being the Son of God, possessing the divine nature, and uniting himself to mortal flesh, you will find that the latter perfectly corresponds with the intention of the apostle. And his emptying himself, and taking upon him the form of a servant, is, indeed, a great instance of condescension, on the supposition of his being a Son; for there is a visible contrast between the being a son and a servant, which the apostle observes when he remarks, that "though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." There is also, upon this supposition, a plain meaning assigned to the whole, the words of existence differing from the words of assumption. "Who BEING in the form of God, MADE himself of no reputation, TOOK upon himself the form of a servant, was MADE in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled himself*." For, here we have the

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state he formerly possessed expressed by the word BEING; and the word MADE, signifying that he became so by being made so; agreeably to what the apostle John says, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God;" and further, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The same apostle, Paul, expresses the reason of his assuming a nature that did not belong to him, an inferior nature: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." But what possible contrast of this nature can be found, upon the supposition of Christ's mere humanity? Where was there any descent from the form of God? And why should that which could not be avoided, which was not voluntary, be expressed in the way it is—"Took upon himself the form of a servant," "humbled himself," and so on, when the very nature of things, the universal law of nature, rendered it impossible for him to be other than a mere man, and, consequently, a servant of the Most High God?

The doctrine of Christ's humiliation and incarnation is expressed in the most forcible manner, and worthy of our most attentive admiration and adoration. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself;" he *still* humbled himself. He was not satisfied with being found in fashion as a man, which was a wonderful act of condescension; he was not satisfied with taking upon him the form of a servant; he not merely assumed a very low

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station in society; but he still humbled himself: he descended lower than the mere level of human nature required; he descended deeper and deeper, and was not contented till he had reached the very bottom of humiliation, till he "became obedient unto death." Nay, even that was not sufficient; there was one death more ignominious, more painful, more replete with agony and shame, than any other; and for the purpose, the glorious purpose, of his coming into our world, he selected that death, he determined to die that death, that very death; and made that his peculiar province in which he should appear, to the destruction of our spiritual enemies, and the conquest of the powers of darkness. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It was from this cross, which was the lowest step to which he could possibly descend, that he arose to his crown; it was from thence that "he ascended up on high," that he was elevated to the right hand of God; that there might be exhibited in his person the most wonderful contrast of the original dignity which he laid aside, then of the scene of shame and suffering which he endured, and afterwards of the majesty and glory with which he invested the nature in which he suffered. He first descended from the throne to the cross; and then, in order that he might take up our nature with him, and make us partakers of his glory, he carried a portion of that nature from the cross to the throne, ascended into heaven, and from thence gives a portion of the benefit of it by the outpouring of his Spirit,

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by the preaching of the Gospel, and the saving of innumerable multitudes of them that believe; and all this in consonance with the purposes of God, whom it became, as the Great Legislator, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

There is only one expression more on which I shall make a remark; and that is, that it is not said he *became* a servant, or *became* a man: all this is *implied;* the form of expression is different. Nor is it here asserted that he was God, though this is strongly implied. But it is thus expressed: "Who, being in the *form* of God, took upon him the *form* of a servant, and was made in the *likeness* of men." Though this plainly implies that Jesus Christ was God, yet the form of expression, no doubt, includes something more; it is intended to express a distinct idea from his being called God; and it appears to me to correspond exactly with the design of the apostle, for his design was to contrast our Lord's state at different times. He had assumed a form under the old dispensation wherein he appeared in various ways, or in different manifestations. When Joshua was about to enter on his war with the Canaanites, he observed a majestic and glorious personage standing over against him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as Captain of the hosts of the Lord am I come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord

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unto his servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." The same command God gave from the burning bush. And in Ezekiel you find, "one in the form of the Son of Man seated on a throne," with a sapphire firmament; and Jesus Christ is represented as distinct from the Father, presenting himself to the Father; so that he is said by the apostle Paul to have been tempted of the Israelites in the wilderness. He manifested himself, but he manifested himself in the form of God, with a majesty and glory suited to his work. But he laid aside that form; he divested himself of it, and took upon him the form of a servant, a human form; and not merely a human form, but he humbled himself still more, and became obedient unto death. He was *found* in fashion as a man: it was a wonderful discovery, an astonishing spectacle in the view of angels, that he who was in the form of God, and adored from eternity, should be made in fashion as a man. But why is it not said that he WAS *a man?* For the same reason that the apostle wishes to dwell upon the *appearance* of our Saviour, not as excluding the reality, but as exemplifying his condescension. His being in the form of God did not prove that he was not God, but rather that he was God, and entitled to supreme honour. So, his assuming the form of a servant, and being in the likeness of man, does not prove that he was not man, but, on the contrary, includes it; at the same time including a manifestation of himself, agreeably to his design of

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purchasing the salvation of his people, and dying for the sins of the world by his sacrificing himself upon the cross. Besides, there is a peculiar propriety in these terms *fashion* and *likeness* of man, though not intended to exclude his proper humanity; for there is a high and glorious distinction in the humanity of Christ as contrasted with every other: every other man is tainted with sin, and partakes of original corruption. But when the angel addressed the Virgin Mary, he said, "That holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." From that contagion which belongs to the human race he was exempted by a miraculous conception. Every other man possesses two parts, body and spirit; but this divine man, this "God-man," consisted of three component parts, a soul, a body, and that Eternal Word, or *Logos*, which formed a part. He is represented as taking upon himself this form, and "being found in fashion as a man," exalted to the adoration of the universe, which beheld the greatest wonder that ever was exhibited to the world, in Him that was God becoming man; for, if it be a wonder that God should *make* man, how much more astonishing that God should *become* man! "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name:" this is the reason. If you ask, how came a portion of human nature thus to be dignified? how came dust and ashes, (for such was a component part of the Saviour,) to be placed at the right hand of God, in the midst of the inaccessible glory? It was—

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because in that nature he suffered, that he was humbled and bowed to the cross; and this was the way in which he ascended to his crown. What an example is this of the force of humility and the efficacy of condescension; of the wonderful power which, according to the rules and laws of the kingdom of God, condescension, patient suffering, and lowliness have, in raising us to true dignity. This is the way the Saviour ascended to the crown.

Be it remembered, "He *became* obedient." There was, therefore, no necessity to obey at all. But he assumed voluntarily a nature which made him capable of suffering: and he obeyed in that nature even unto death, "the death of the cross;" in order that he might make it becoming the character of God, as a Moral Governor, to grant pardon to a whole race of apostate and guilty, but believing and penitent, creatures.

And yet we are told that Christ is not to be called a Saviour exclusively; we are told that Paul, and Peter, and others, shared in the glory of saving mankind. Nay, we are told that all this argument of the apostle in the text, conclusive as it is, both from the words and phrases which are employed, and from the disposition in the mind of Christ which the whole of the reasoning implies,—that all this, instead of proving the preexistence and divinity of Christ, proves nothing of the kind. Indeed, farther, the leader of the unitarians in the present day declares, that no words can ever be clear enough to prove to him that Christ is God; and that if he should find any

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such words in the scripture, they would only serve to weaken the evidence of the truth of the christian revelation, and would not convince him that the statement was true. With such men we can have no communion. Such a spirit shuts up all the avenues to truth and conviction; nay, it is the height of arrogance and practical infidelity in a creature like man. For it not only leads to error,—dangerous, fatal, destructive error, growing out of a spirit diametrically opposite to that inculcated in the text,—but it goes to the frightful length of setting itself above revelation; of limiting the wisdom of the Infinite Mind; by affirming that the revealed declarations, concerning the incomprehensible God, cannot be true: thus subverting the whole foundation of faith.

Be careful then, my brethren, that "the same mind be in *you* which was also in Christ Jesus." If you wish to be great in the kingdom of God, go in the same path. If you wish to possess true dignity, lower yourself. If you wish to reign with him, you must also suffer with him: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." We cannot follow the Saviour without pursuing the same path; we must tread in the same steps: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me;" and "Where I am, there shall also my servant be;" for "He that honoureth me, him will my Father honour."

This wonderful mystery of our redemption is of the most practical tendency; not only because

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it exhibits such affecting views of the evil of sin, and of the price of our redemption, but because it shews the connexion between humility and true dignity. The glory of the cross consists in this—that it is the way to the crown. The christian religion is distinguished from all others, by turning men's minds from aspiring to dignity here, inducing them to forego their own good, to cast away their lives, to make shipwreck of all but faith, to give up themselves to God's will entirely, to follow wherever the Saviour leads, and to press into the celestial kingdom through agonies, and crosses, and torments—through every possible obstacle. This is the way the Saviour went, and it is in this way we must expect to be partakers of his glory. "Let *this* mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

The time forbids my enlarging upon this subject, by pressing the practical conclusion from it in its different branches; but I cannot close without urging upon all, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;"—"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is one of the first principles of our religion, one of the elementary truths of christianity, that "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." "Let the same mind be in you."—You who are possessed of property, devote *that* in the way it becomes the servants of so divine a Master. Consider the use *he* would have made of that portion of this world's good, which he declined as an example of patience

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and humility. Consider to what purpose *he* employed his heavenly powers; and to the same purpose employ your natural advantages and civil resources. When did he employ that word, which commanded angels and devils, and subdued the very elements of nature, for the purposes of ostentation? When were his words any thing but spirit and life? When did they operate to any purpose but to communicate health to the dying, purity to the guilty, pardon to the sinful, and salvation and benefits to all around him? "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You possess a portion of this world's good: if you are true christians, you will consider this as belonging to your Lord, as belonging to the poor of his people, as belonging to the world—to all but yourselves, and will consider all as having a much greater property in it, morally considered, than yourselves; you will regard yourselves as the stewards of God, and the most unjust persons (though not amenable to any human tribunal, but to your Saviour and your Lord,) if you employ them to any other purposes than those of beneficence. If you deem it peculiarly honourable to die rich, and to leave estates afterwards to your children, to have them "called by your own name," that name will be a name of infamy. No, my brethren, be assured such a mistaken course will *cancel* your name, will blot it out of the Lamb's book of life for ever. Let then "the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And those who are elevated in rank; let them not use

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it merely for the purpose of levying homage from men, of making a vain shew, of appearing in artificial splendour. And those who are possessed of influence; let them use it also for the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures. Never was any one so exalted as our Saviour, and never did any one make such a use of his exaltation. He shrouded it in the deep veil of humanity; he concealed it from the view of the world. None but the piercing eye of faith, illuminated by the Spirit of God, could behold it. The world knew him not. "*We* beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Do *you* then, my brethren, employ your influence in that manner. Never make it the means of keeping at a distance from you the poor, the distressed, and the afflicted. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Do not dwell on the contemplation of your own greatness; do not separate yourselves from your fellow-creatures. Do not suffer yourselves to be hedged in and fenced round from them, by the riches of this world; but communicate them to others, and pray for the blessing of God upon the right use of them, that they may turn to incorruptible riches and righteousness; that these perishing riches and this evil mammon may not seduce you from the right way to the everlasting mansions. If you are not faithful over a little, how shall you be faithful over much? and if you are not faithful to that which

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is the property of God, who lends it to you for a time, but gives to none a discretionary use of it, how shall he give you "that crown of righteousness that fadeth not away," that glory which will be a part of your nature, which will satisfy your souls, and make you great, and happy, and blessed, to all eternity?

"Let nothing be done," saith the apostle, "through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Let men learn of Jesus Christ that humility which disposed him to behave as if he had been the lowest and meanest of all. Our blessed Saviour was not unconscious of his high dignity, but he knew that it was important to exhibit *the spirit* of his religion in great humility. When he knew that he was shortly to go to his Father, and that "the Father had given all things into his hands, then he took a towel, and girded himself, and washed his disciples' feet." When he was about to take possession of universal empire, and heaven, earth, and hell, were to be submitted to him,—when he knew that he was just about to be crowned with immortal glory, after he had sustained the divine frown for the salvation of men, even "*then* he took a towel, and girded himself, and washed his disciples' feet, saying, Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am; if I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet,"—to condescend to the lowest office of christian beneficence and love.

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Again, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," in his entrance into the world: consider with what sympathy he regarded mankind, and what drew him from his exalted seat of majesty on high. How did he look down upon a distant race far removed from him, and compassionate their misery! how did he, as it were, for a season annihilate himself! how did he take their curse upon him, and invest himself with their nature! He looked upon them with unutterable and tender compassion: "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You live among men dead in trespasses and sins; you see nations innumerable sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Consider what compassion actuated the Saviour's breast in coming down from heaven to pay the price of our redemption, to make peace with God, and bring in everlasting righteousness. What compassion touched his holy and beneficent mind, inducing him to die a sacrifice for the sins of his people! Do you have the same mind: compassionate the distant and miserable children of men involved in darkness. Carry your eyes to the remotest borders of the earth; and be not satisfied until the whole earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord, till all men have seen the salvation of God. Let no distance of place, no difference of circumstances, prevent your exerting yourselves to spread the knowledge of Him "who made himself of no reputation." Let nothing prevent your feeling a participation of the common nature. God has provided for sympathy

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by making you "of one blood;" so that you must act contrary to the laws of nature, if you do not sympathize with your fellow-creatures. "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" then will the religion of Christ extend itself far and wide. Let this mind distinguish the followers of Christ; and all men will confess that God is among you of a truth. You will be all of one heart, and one mind; you will be actuated by such a desire as will render you beneficial to all your fellow-creatures, as will make you the "light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." Then would iniquity stop its mouth, and so you would confound infidelity and impiety. Seriously study the doctrine of the cross, place yourselves there, consider what are the morals of the cross; consider what are the dispositions the cross inculcates; what is the influence of the fact that you are purchased, redeemed, and, by his Spirit, prepared for a seat at the right hand of God; what the everlasting advantages which accrue from being purchased by such blood, saved by such humility; what the doctrines of the Saviour's incarnation, sacrifice, and ascent to heaven, inculcate on christian hearts. It opens a fountain of love, of wonderful and inexhaustible compassion; and it is at that fountain of love we should study: for we shall never be truly happy till we *do* study the spirit of our religion at the foot of the cross. We should enter more deeply into the dying love of Christ, that we may "comprehend, with all saints, what is the height, and depth, and breadth, and

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length, of that love which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God."

Finally, my brethren, we see here the great and intimate connexion between the practical principles of religion, and the great doctrines of christianity. Take away the incarnation of our Lord, and his sacrifice upon the cross, and these sublime and glorious truths lose all their meaning: this great example dwindles into nothing, if we lose sight of Christ's dignity, glory, and humility. It is this which renders his sacrifice of infinite value. It is this which renders his cross so inexpressibly awful and so interesting. It is this which makes it so infinitely precious to his people. The cross of Jesus Christ is the appropriate, the appointed, rendezvous of heaven and earth;* the meeting-place between God and the sinner: thus the principles of the cross become the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Deprive Jesus Christ of his dignity, deprive his person of divinity and pre-existence as the Son of God, and all these momentous truths dwindle into inexpressible futilities. Doctrines meant to warm and kindle our hearts, fill us with perplexity. When we look for a glorious mystery, we find nothing but the obscurity and perplexity that make men rack their invention to find out the meaning of those passages which it is plain the apostle poured forth in a stream of exquisite affection and delight.

But "we have not so learned Christ:" Hold fast

* See Vol. V. pp. 151—158. Ed.

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the cross of Christ. You who are not acquainted with the christian religion, come to Jesus Christ by faith; cast yourselves upon the dying love of the Saviour; receive him by faith. And those of you who *have* received the Saviour, study him more and more; impress still more and more upon your minds the lessons which Christ crucified teaches. This is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation; and by means of this only shall we grow up into conformity to our blessed Lord and Saviour: which God grant, of his infinite mercy. Amen.

V.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

[PREACHED AT KETTERING, IN JUNE, 1813.]

PSALM cxlv. 11.—"*They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.*"*

THE absolute dominion of God is a subject worthy to be celebrated by all creatures: it is the frequent theme of praise in the Scriptures, which were dictated by the Holy Ghost.

There is another kingdom, which God has intrusted to the hands of his well-beloved Son—the mediatorial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Bedford. For Mr. Hall's own notes, see Vol. V. pp. 158—167.

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This is the subject of the most exalted praise, and of the most glorious prophecies of the Old Testament, as well as of all the histories, doctrines, and revelations of the New Testament. This is styled the kingdom of heaven, and of God: it is the kingdom which the God of heaven has set up among men upon the earth. It is contrasted with the kingdom of the power of darkness; and its subjects are described as being translated out of the kingdom of darkness, into "the kingdom of God's dear Son,"* which is a kingdom of "marvellous light."

Whether the Psalm before us is designed, in particular, to celebrate this dispensation of the Son of God, I shall not now inquire; but as the kingdom of Christ is so conspicuous an object in both Testaments, and is the only one among men by whose government their happiness can be secured, it cannot be improper, from the words before us, to direct your attention, on the present occasion, to some particulars relating to the glory of this kingdom.

I. The glory of this kingdom is manifested in its origin. It had its origin in infinite mercy and grace. It was the object of the divine and eternal purposes of the Father; an object to which all other purposes were subservient. It entered into the councils of the Eternal before the foundation of the world was laid. It was a grand design, intended to include the reign of God over the mind of man; a purpose to establish a kingdom, the subjects of

* Colos. i. 13.

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which should be raised to be partakers of the same nature as their Sovereign.

In order to establish this kingdom, it was necessary that the Son of God should become incarnate; the "Mighty God" must be a "child born unto us," that he might have the "government laid upon his shoulders," and be the "Prince of Peace" to his redeemed people. God purposed to have his tabernacle among men, and to be their God; but this he could not do, consistently with his truth and holiness, till an atonement was made to his law in the death of the person of his Son. The institution of sacrifices under the law intimated that "without the shedding of blood there was no remission;"* their insufficiency evidenced the necessity of a sacrifice of transcendent value: "Then said he, Sacrifices and offerings thou didst not desire; lo, I come to do thy will, O God."† Thus the foundation of the kingdom was laid in the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God; a foundation proportionate to the grandeur and beauty of the edifice that was to be erected.

The doctrines of the gospel were, and are, the grand instruments in the hand of the Lord Jesus for bringing souls into subjection to his sceptre. The King must ride forth conquering and to conquer; all his subjects must be rescued and subdued: but what a battle is that in which he engages! "Every battle among men is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood," but this is "with burning and with fire." The warfare

* Heb. ix. 22. † Psalm xl. 6—8.

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is entirely spiritual; it is carried on by the light of truth and the burning of conviction. The mere testimony of the gospel, in the mouth of the witnesses, produced effects more wonderful than any that were ever produced by the violence of the sword: by this the powers of darkness were shaken, their temples deserted, and their oracles silenced. Heavenly truth combated with sophistry and error, and gained a decisive victory, though her opponents were armed with all the persecuting powers of the kingdoms of this world. The Psalmist, foreseeing the contest, said, long since, "Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O most Mighty, and in thy majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness."* These have had no share in the extension of human dominion, but were the principal instruments that were used in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. To these, in his hand, and by his Spirit, the success of the gospel is to be ascribed: by these, his people became a "willing people in the day of his power;" a conquered, yet a willing people; led captive, yet obedient. This is a glorious manner of raising a kingdom, worthy of him who is a Spirit, and who reigns by spiritual and intellectual means in the hearts of his people. Could we trace the means by which God has established his empire, it would fill our minds with admiration, and our lips with praise: then should we "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

* Psalm xlv. 3, 4.

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II. The glory of the kingdom of Christ is manifested in the manner and spirit of its administration.

The last words of David describe the manner of administering this government:—"The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."*

The most essential quality in the administration of any government is justice; and justice is most conspicuous in this administration. The Sovereign confers no benefits on his friends, and inflicts no punishments on his enemies, but what are consistent with righteousness. "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."† He will render to each of his subjects, not *for* their works, yet, *according to* their works. He establishes his holy law as the rule of their conduct, and makes use of such motives to excite them to holy and spiritual obedience as are suitable to their nature, both as rational and

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—4. † Isaiah xi. 4, 5.

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as fallen creatures. As the law was first employed, so it is still used for conviction, for alarming the consciences even of the redeemed and the regenerate, and to excite to repentance and to renewed exercises of reformation.

The administration of this kingdom is also benign and gracious—it is indeed a kingdom of grace. The throne is a throne of grace, and the sceptre is a sceptre of grace. He revealeth his grace, which is his glory; and thus he captivates the hearts of his people. He, in his great kindness, invites to him all that are athirst, all that are "weary and heavy laden,"* and assures them that they shall find rest and refreshment. "He delivers the poor, when he cries, the needy, and him that hath no helper." He is the husband of the widow, and the father of the fatherless in his holy habitation. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst," he graciously says, "I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."†

In earthly kingdoms, the subjects are governed by general laws, which must necessarily be very inadequate to the variety of cases and occurrences. It is impossible that the multiplicity of actions, and all their individual shades, should be at all times considered and distinguished: hence has arisen the

* Matt. xi. 28. † Isaiah xli. 17, 18.

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proverb, "*Summum jus, summa injuria.*" But our King is intimately acquainted with all hearts, and, being present in all places, he can apply his acts to individual examples, and appropriate smiles and frowns to each, as if there were no other beings that participated in his attention. In human administrations, the law extends only to outward acts; it relates only to objects of sense; insomuch that a pure spirit, disengaged from the body, is free from its sanction: but the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual one—it extends to the heart; it relates not to meats and drinks, but it is a kingdom that is "within you,"* and relates to "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."† It is founded in communion with Christ: by his Spirit Christ lives in his members; their souls, whether in the body or out of the body, are always in his hands; he is Lord, both of the dead and the living; he adjusts himself to all cases, through every part of his vast empire. In earthly kingdoms, the utmost that can be done is, to lay down rules, to prescribe laws, and to sanction by rewards or penalties; but Jesus Christ can write his laws on the hearts of his people. "They are engraven, not on stone, but on fleshly tables."‡ He knows how to speak to the heart; and "they know his voice, and follow him; but a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger."§

It is justly considered a high excellency in a ruler, that he is disinterested, that he pursues no interest

* Luke xvii. 21.
† Rom. xiv. 17.
‡ 2 Cor. iii. 3.
§ John x. 4, 5.

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of his own, apart from the general good of the empire: this is the very flower of royalty; and those who have thus distinguished themselves have been justly considered as the greatest benefactors of mankind; they have been obeyed and loved while they lived, and foolishly idolized and worshipped when they died. But never was any one so disinterested as the King of Zion, who laid down his life for his people, while they were yet enemies. He wields the sceptre of universal dominion: he chains death and hell, quells the devils, and overrules all things for the good of his church. Though he sits at the right hand of God, he could not enjoy even that station, were it to continue a solitary one. "Father," says he, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."* "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."† He blends the deepest condescension with the highest majesty. He is a lion against their enemies, but to them he appears as "a lamb in the midst of the throne." The whole of his history is a history of the sacrifice of selfish feelings. The glory of the Father, and the good of man; these engaged his heart, these brought him from heaven, these regulated all his actions and sufferings; and he rested not till he could say, "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."‡ Well may we "speak," then, "of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

* John xvii. 24. † John xiv. 3. ‡ John xvii. 4.

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III. The glory of the kingdom of Christ appears in the character of his subjects.

The character of a people for greatness and for virtue is part of the glory of any kingdom; and it must not be omitted here. The Divine Ruler will derive much of his glory from the change that he has wrought in his people. "This people have I formed for myself," says he; "they shall shew forth my praise."* As this change is derived from above, there is no foundation for boasting, yet the change is not the less real: it is the communication of the Saviour's image and spirit: and, when he comes, he will be glorified in his saints.

I cannot enter largely into a description of the subjects of this kingdom, nor is it necessary; but a few observations may be made.

1. These subjects are enlightened: they have just conceptions of things; they are delivered out of darkness, which envelopes the rest of mankind, as the children of Israel had light in the land of Goshen when the habitations of the Egyptians were in darkness. They see things as they are: they see them, in some measure, as they are seen by Jesus, the "true Light;" they form right estimates of objects, as they are holy or sinful, temporal or eternal; they reckon that all worldly treasures and delights are nothing and vanity when compared with the spiritual and everlasting riches and pleasures of Christ and his kingdom.

2. The subjects of this kingdom are renewed: the Spirit of God changes their heart; they are

* Isaiah xliii. 21.

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made, imperfectly, yet truly holy; they have a principle in them that aims at perfection; their characters are mixed, but the best part struggles against the worst, and will finally triumph. It is in this kingdom where patience, purity, humility, faith, and love to God and men, reside. Whatever of true holiness is to be found on earth, here you must find it: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."* But these are renewed after the image of God: there is something divine impressed upon their characters; they have a principle in them that comes from God and leads to God, and inspires their souls with earnest longings after him. "My soul followeth hard after God."† "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee."‡ They have been reclaimed from their revolt, and are truly loyal; they are "called, chosen, and faithful." From their wanderings they have "returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls;" they lament that they ever were his enemies, that they ever lived at a distance from him; and it is now their sincere desire to obey him while they live, and to breathe out their souls in his service.

3. The subjects of this kingdom have in them a preparation for perfect blessedness. They that do not belong to Christ are disqualified for heaven, but those that belong to him have the elementary preparation for heaven; they have that which

* 1 John v. 19. † Psalm lxiii. 8. ‡ Psalm lxxiii. 25.

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meetens them "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." They are not entirely cured, it is true, of all the infection of sin; the venom of the "old serpent" is not expelled: but they are under a restorative process; they are under the method of cure; they are taking the medicine which is of sovereign efficacy. All the love and joy that glow with celestial fervour before the throne of the Heavenly Majesty, is only the consummation of seeds like those which are sown in the hearts of believers: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."* They are sown in their hearts: and when that which is sown, or is to be sown, shall be matured, Jesus Christ will present unto himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."† And what a spectacle will this be! how will the saints themselves be astonished at their attainments! It will require an eternity to know ourselves, much more to know the Fountain whence all these beauties and glories have been derived. Then, indeed, shall we "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

IV. The glory of the kingdom of Christ is manifest in the privileges that are attached to it.

The privileges are transcendently great, far beyond our comprehension. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath laid up for them that love him;‡ but the Spirit of God, which searcheth all things, in some measure

* Psalm xcvii. 11. † Ephes. v. 27. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

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manifests them to us by his word, and gives us a taste for them in our experience.

1. Peace is a peculiar blessing of this kingdom. The Ruler is called, "The Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his kingdom and peace, there shall be no end. This begins in reconciliation with God; the healing of the great breach which sin has made. With respect to them, the great controversy which has opposed earth to heaven is at an end: they are reconciled, free from condemnation, delivered from that cloud of wrath which overhangs the rest of the world; they are justified by faith, and therefore have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The consequence of peace with God is peace with one another; a spirit which unites men in a wonderful manner to their fellow-creatures, and especially to their fellow-christians. This, when it is diffused, will produce peace among all families and nations; it will be an antidote against all the animosities and discords that have prevailed in the world.

2. The dignity of the subjects of this kingdom is another privilege. Is it considered an honour for a king to have a large train of nobles, who can trace their origin through a long line of progenitors? Are these the strength of the throne? What a noble race are the subjects of Christ's kingdom! To "as many as receive him, he gives the power to become the sons of God."* This is the highest of all titles. Their earthly descent is not noticed; "it doth not yet appear what they shall be:" but

* John i. 12.

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this is their nobility—"Now are ye the sons of God, and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." "What manner of love is this which the Father hath bestowed upon us?" All these sons shall be advanced to the kingdom; they shall every one of them be kings and priests unto God, and unite together in ascribing glory, and honour, and praise, and power, unto Him who redeemed them, and conferred this honour upon them." They shall have dominion over their sins, over the world, and over Satan, who shall be "bruised under their feet shortly." They will be invested with a holy office, reigning under Christ, and for his service and glory, for ever.

3. Immortality shall be the blessing of this kingdom: the subjects shall partake of endless life; a life that shall never be extinguished. In the Scriptures we read, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus shall never die. The fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead; but he that eateth of the bread that I shall give him, shall never die."* He that keepeth the sayings of Christ shall not taste of death. Death, in the scripture sense, includes that separation from God which begins in spiritual and is completed in eternal death;† this is that of which believers cannot taste. They receive in them the embryo of eternal life: the spiritual

* John vi. 58.

† See pp. 99—102, of "Exegetical Essays on several Words relating to Future Punishment," by Professor Stuart, of Andover, United States; a work in which philological acumen and research are finely blended with sound discrimination and a genuine love of truth.—Ed.

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life rises up into life eternal, and will be displayed in its perfection in the world of glory. As subjects of Christ's kingdom, his servants are immortal; whatever affects their frail bodies, nothing can separate them from the love of Christ.

What an important blessing is the possession of eternal life and the resurrection of the dead! These terms include everlasting felicity in the presence of God: the privilege is ineffable and invaluable, surpassing our apprehension, or any comparison that can be made. To enjoy the smallest portion of this blessing, is to be superior to all the greatness of the present state: the least in the kingdom of heaven is higher than the most exalted of the rulers and the philosophers of the world. We shall shortly see this to be the true representation of the subject. Wicked men shall see it to be so, when, between them and the righteous, "there is a great gulf fixed;" good men will find it to be so, and their spirits will even fail within them, when they behold the order of the court of heaven, and the majesty of the kingdom.

These blessings which I have mentioned, will not only be put within the reach, but made to be the possession, of the subjects of the kingdom of heaven.

The benefits that result from well-regulated governments on earth are generally such as restrain from the pursuits of evil, prevent interference with others, remove obstructions, leave open various avenues to the prosperity of individuals. Each subject must pursue his own course, and make his own fortune; but in this kingdom, positive blessings

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are conveyed. "The Lord will be to his people a place of broad rivers and streams."* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."† He not only subdues our enemies, but delivers us from our trials; while he himself becomes a source of satisfying good. "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."‡ "I give unto them eternal life."§

I might mention some other properties of this kingdom, which, though they do not enter into the essence of it, are very important.

It is a growing kingdom. At first it was small, but it had in it an expansive power: it was "a little stone hewn out of a mountain without hands," but it shall become "a great mountain, and fill all the earth." It has grown, and is growing; "and of its increase there shall be no end."|| "He must increase; he shall reign until all things are put under him." He goes on "conquering and to conquer:" the last enemy shall be overcome and be bound to the wheels of his chariot. The Scriptures are much occupied in these things. Prophets thought as much of missions, their labours, and their successes, as we do: they employed the most glowing language, and the sublimest strains, in their predictions of the glory of Messiah's kingdom in the latter day; they snatch from earth and

* Isaiah xxxiii. 21. † 1 Pet. i. 3. ‡ John xiv. 27.
§ John x. 28. || Isaiah ix. 7.

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heaven, from the sun, the moon, and stars, the fairest and the grandest images, to represent the state of the church at that desired period; they levy a tribute upon universal nature, and make all things contribute to illustrate, as they will in reality contribute to advance, this kingdom.

This is a subject, then, my brethren, which can never be exhausted; you may speak of it through eternity! Open all your hearts, utter the most astonishing eloquence, call forth the host of angels to assist you in celestial songs; and still fresh views will burst upon your minds: you will appear for ever only to be at the beginning of the theme, only to be standing upon the borders of Immanuel's land; you will be called upon perpetually to rejoice, and again to rejoice, while you "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

In connexion with those qualities which I have mentioned, the *perpetuity* of this kingdom must endear it, above all things, to a good man: this indeed crowns the whole. It is a perpetual kingdom; it shall never be removed; it shall never be taken away to be given to any other people; but the saints of the Most High shall continually possess it. It shall rise upon the ruins of all other dominions, and shall itself never be subverted.

Let us then rejoice at the tokens which we see of God's purpose to extend this kingdom. Our eyes have seen great and wonderful things: God is doing much for his church; we have advantages beyond any of our predecessors. Such a period as this has not been witnessed since the days of the

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apostles: all events seem to be pointing to the final issue; and this should reconcile us to live in a time of desolation. In the midst of the darkness that surrounds us, a bright point is visible that forebodes the dawn of a brighter day. God is overturning, overturning; but it is to prepare the way for *his* coming whose right it is, and who shall reign for ever.

The kingdoms of this world are changing and falling to ruin. Let us not be dismayed at this; they are made of changeable materials. We ought not to wonder if the mortal dies, and if the changeable changes; but ever rejoice that we receive "a kingdom which cannot be moved."* Let us have grace, while we see these things, "to serve the Lord acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

This kingdom, my brethren, will advance in the world when we depart out of it. It is a kingdom, at present, consisting of two parts; there is an upper, and a lower province: in the lower province the subjects are required to struggle and fight; when called hence, they shall triumph. Then shall we know what is meant by the glory of this kingdom, when "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes," and when "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of water;"† when we shall "rejoice before the throne, and reign for ever and ever."‡

Let us, while we live here, sincerely pray and labour for the advancement and glorious increase

* Heb. xii. 28. † Rev. vii. 17. ‡ Rev. vii. 9, 15.

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of this kingdom, which embraces all the elements of purity and happiness. "This is all our salvation," and should be all our desire. Beyond this, there is nothing to be hoped for; without this, there is nothing on earth that can render the prospect of death tolerable, or life worth possessing.

Finally, then, let us look to ourselves, that, while we hear these things, we may possess a personal interest in this kingdom. "The law and the prophets were until John:" but now is the kingdom of heaven; and let every man be pressing into it. Press into it—strive to enter. Strive as in an agony: "for many shall strive" imperfectly, "and shall not be able." Let it be your determination, by the aid of promised grace, to surmount every difficulty. Press into the kingdom: for behind thee is the wrath and curse of Almighty God; but within is a place of safety, of peace, and joy. Put your feet within the limits of this kingdom, and it will be as one of the cities of refuge to the men that were pursued by the avengers of blood; and the further you penetrate, the more will your peace and joy be promoted.

To be within this kingdom—how important! Why are there, then, any of you that are not earnestly seeking it? If you have not felt a concern about it before, what are your present thoughts? Is what we have advanced all imagination? Is it only a *fancied* empire that has been represented to you? Is there such a kingdom among men? Have you heard of it, have you seen it? And is the Saviour, the Lord of his church, wooing your

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souls? Is he asking leave to come in? Does he say, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in?"* Open then the door, and let the King of Glory come in. If he visits you, it is that he may reign in you; and then he will bless you with his salvation. There is no one wise that does not yield to the Saviour: all are fools who are not either rejoicing in the evidence that they are in this kingdom, or earnestly desirous of it. Be not content that this kingdom should appear before you for a time, and then vanish away for ever; say not, I shall see it, but not for myself. Oh, thou that art exalted to heaven, take heed lest thou be thrust down into hell! The kingdom of God indeed is come nigh unto you: it is nigh you in the gospel, it is nigh you in the efforts of the present time, it is nigh you in the endeavours of your ministers, it is nigh you in every sermon you hear, and in every ordinance you attend. It is nigh you; and you will never get quit of this thought: it will be as a sharp arrow that will drink up your spirits to all eternity. When it is far from you, when between you and the blessed subjects of it "there is a great gulf fixed,"† you will for ever cry, Once it was nigh me; every sabbath it was nigh me; every day it was nigh me; for months and years together it was nigh me; but I refused it; I thrust it from me; I would have none of the Saviour's counsel, I rejected his reproof: and now—it is past; it is gone; the things of the kingdom are

* Rev. iii. 20. † Luke xvi. 26.

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for ever hidden from my eyes! Beware, lest that come upon you which is written; "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."* "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."†

* Acts xiii. 40, 41. † Psalm ii. 12.

VI.

GOD'S WAYS, THOUGH OFTEN INSCRUTABLE, ARE RIGHTEOUS AND JUST.*

[PREACHED AT LUTON, MAY, 1815.]

PSALM xcvii. 2.—*Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne.*

THIS Psalm commences with a statement of the most important doctrine of religion; a doctrine which is the foundation of all serious piety;—the rule and dominion of God over his creatures. It then calls to rejoicing in that great fact. In every time of trouble this is the Christian's consolation; and it is his chief joy in his best moments. He who is "above all," continually conducts the machine of providence, and superintends all things in every part of the universe. This is the unfailing source of comfort to a good man,—"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice."

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Samuel Hillyard.

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In the text we have a concession made, perfectly consistent with the great truth before propounded: "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne." Two propositions are contained in this text, to which I now propose calling your attention.

I. "Clouds and darkness are round about God."

II. "Righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne."

I. "Clouds and darkness are round about God." The figurative language in the poetical parts of the Old Testament is frequently taken from the historical books, and refers to the facts therein recorded: thus the appearances of God to the saints and patriarchs in old times, is the origin of the figure in our text. If you look at the history of these appearances, you will find they were all accompanied with clouds and darkness. The cloud of the Lord went before the children of Israel when they departed from the land of bondage. This cloud had a dark and a bright side, and was a symbol of the divine presence: thus it preceded the people in all their marches, as a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day.* When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priest could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the house.† When God descended upon Mount Sinai, "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of

* Exod. xiv. 19, 20. † 1 Kings viii. 10, 11.

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the trumpet exceeding loud. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, upon the top of the mount."* When our Saviour was transfigured before three of his disciples, "a bright cloud overshadowed them," from which proceeded the voice of the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."† And Peter, who was present there, afterwards referring to this fact, says, that the voice proceeded "from the excellent glory."‡ Thus, in all the symbols of the divine presence, there was a mixture of splendour with darkness and obscurity. So it is in the operations of providence: in a moral and figurative sense we may say, that clouds and darkness surround all the operations of divine power and wisdom.

Clouds are emblems of obscurity; darkness, of distress. The works of God's providence are often obscure and productive of distress to mankind, though "righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne."

In the present state of the affairs of the nations we see the interference of Divine Providence; and yet it is surrounded with clouds and darkness. Never was the hand of God more conspicuous, yet never were men less able to penetrate and comprehend his deep and unfathomable designs.

* Exod. xix. 16, 18, 20. † Matt. xvii. 5.
‡ 2 Pet. i. 17.

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As this is the divine method of government with respect to affairs of a larger scale, so it is also in instances of a smaller and inferior kind: it is thus in the removal of the most eminent, holy, and useful characters, that while we acknowledge the hand of God, we say "clouds and darkness are round about him." Such removals we have experienced: "The fathers, where are they; and the prophets, do they live for ever?" No. Such as seemed most necessary in the church, the pillars of the temple, are removed, and many are trembling for the ark of God. We are taught to "be still, and know that he is God," since "what we know not now we shall know hereafter:" and we feel it necessary, in our obscurity and distress, to refer to the great principles of his government, "Judgement and righteousness are the habitation of his throne."

The course of events has not been such as might have been expected from the known character of God. If we look into the book of history we shall perceive that there is much disorder in earthly scenes, much confusion in the affairs of men; and was this to be expected from a God of order and wisdom? We know that he is a Being of infinite mercy, that out of his infinite fulness he loves to communicate happiness to his creatures; yet we see them oppressed with calamity, surrounded by miseries; and we find that man has, in all ages and in all stations, been "born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

Again, we know that God, in his great love to our world, has devised a plan to raise men to

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happiness and glory; his regard to this plan, and the objects of it, appears in all the doctrines of revelation, in all the miracles by which they are supported, and in all the prophecies and glorious things that are spoken concerning the church, by which our expectations have been greatly raised. But how have those expectations fallen short of their accomplishment; what a small part of the world is enlightened by the beams of the "Sun of Righteousness;" how narrow are the limits of the gospel; how little has been done by christianity, compared with what might have been anticipated from the divine principles, the character of the Author, and from the interest it possesses in the heart of God. We have, as yet, wrought almost no deliverance in the earth; Paganism yet strikes deep its roots in various lands; Mahometanism has plucked up the "good seed of the kingdom" in countries where that seed brought forth fruit abundantly: even in what is called Christendom, how little have the known and blessed effects of the gospel been manifested. Jesus Christ came to reconcile all who receive him into one family; to make, of many, one body; to compose discords, to allay violent passions and animosities, to make wars to cease, and to give peace, and love, and harmony, to his followers; but those called christians have been inflamed and armed against each other. From the beginning, dangerous errors have produced noxious effects; the "mystery of iniquity" began to work; those who "named the name of Christ" have inflicted greater barbarities upon one

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another, under the influence of superstition and bigotry, than their fathers had suffered from their pagan persecutors. The woman that "sat upon the scarlet-coloured beast" is indeed "full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns;" she is still arrayed in "purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abomination and filthiness, and fornication; and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth. And I saw," says the apostle, "the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration."* And what could be less expected, what more surprising, than that christianity should occasion the discovery of so much vileness? Nay, where genuine christianity is taught, how small has been its progress; how few seem to be converted to God, compared with those who are enemies in heart to him, and to the kingdom to which they profess to belong! Instead of christians being of one heart and of one mind, they are armed with malice and envy against each other on account of some differences of sentiment and judgement; even persons of real piety give way to prejudice and party zeal, which prevent, in a great measure, the operation and effect of pure christianity. Thus this blessed system of religion seems to have been the occasion of more feuds and strifes among its professors than any

* Rev. xvii. 4—6

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other interest has produced since the world began. Look at the state of the world; see nations professing the name of Christ rushing into hostilities, building all their hopes of future peace upon the success of their plans of bloodshed and carnage, breathing defiance and slaughter in their words, and displaying them in their enraged countenances. When will the end of these things be? Were it not for the sure word of prophecy, we might be ready to imagine "God had made all men in vain." A great part of the world is no better than if Christ had never come to save mankind, and the gospel had never been proclaimed. Some who hear it are even the worse for what they hear; for where it is not "a savour of life unto life," it is "a savour of death unto death."

I might expatiate still more on this portion of the text; but sufficient has been said to prove that things have not been according to expectations founded on the known character of God, but that "clouds and darkness are round about him."

We proceed, then, to the second class of remarks, suggested by the passage before us.

II. "Judgement and righteousness are the habitation of his throne."

Righteousness is the essential perfection of the Divine Being. It is his nature: if there had been no creatures for him to govern, he would have had an unchangeable and invincible love of rectitude.

Judgement is the application of the principle of righteousness in his government of his creatures and their actions; it is a developement of his

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rectitude in the management of the affairs of his great empire; it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all things are directed to some vast and important end. Judgement implies measure and equity, in opposition to what is done without rule and consideration. All the divine conduct is equitable, regulated by rectitude, and every thing is directed by a judgement that cannot err.

Thus "Righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne." The throne of God is built, and stands firm, upon these principles: they are the place, the basis, and the foundation of his throne. Though the clouds cannot be dispelled, though there is thick darkness round about, through which our eyes cannot penetrate; yet there are principles discernible through the light of revelation, and by the eye of faith, which may serve to subdue despondency, and lead us to acquiesce in all the measures of the righteous Sovereign. Though much obscurity must be attached to the government of the Infinite Mind, and great perplexities may be felt by those who attempt to scan his measures; yet some considerations may be suggested, which will serve to quell our anxieties and afford us repose under all the darkness, beneath his protecting power, his all-directing wisdom, and his paternal goodness.

1. Let us ever remember that the dispensations of God towards man are regulated by the consideration of his being a fallen and disordered creature. If we do not admit, or if we forget this, we are in great danger of falling into universal

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scepticism, and shall not be able to conclude, that "verily there is a God, that judgeth in the earth." If man is now in the state in which he was originally created, all is obscurity and gross darkness; but if we understand that man is a creature who, by his own fault, has lost that favour with God which he once enjoyed, and yet is placed under a dispensation of mercy; frowned upon, but not given up to destruction; open to receive the grace of God under the gospel, and by the mediation of Jesus Christ; there is some light shooting through the darkness, by which we see the "righteousness and judgement" which are the "habitation of his throne."

The fallen state of man must be kept in view to account for the severities in the divine dealings with him. His banishment from paradise; the curse of the ground, by which it brings forth thorns and briers, and the sweat of the brow by which he eats his bread; the labour and sorrow of the woman in child-bearing; and, finally, the sentence of death which is passed upon man, and keeps him always in bondage; and the present state of society, the fraud, rapine, cruelty, lust, and contention, are all accounted for, only by reverting to the fall of man from the image and favour of God. Yet, notwithstanding the severities of God, let it not be forgotten that there are mixtures of mercy which we have reason to admire. They that have forfeited all right to happiness, must not complain if any drops of it are found in their cup. They that have lost the inheritance, must not complain

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if any of its fruits are afforded to them. They that deserve to be banished into outer darkness, must not complain if "clouds and darkness are round about Him" whom they have offended. "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"* .

They that deny the depravity of human nature are involved in perplexity, and speak on the subject of divine government with such doubt, confusion, and perplexity, as increases scepticism in themselves, while it too often produces it in their admirers.

The doctrine of the fall of man must be considered as a fact: to a knowledge of this the Scripture conducts; it relates the circumstances of the original transgression; expressly asserts that "God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions;"† and that "by one man, judgement passed upon all men to condemnation."‡

2. The Divine Being was not bound, in justice, either to prevent the disordered state of man, or to correct it when it had taken place.

All moral government has its foundation in the suitability of its laws and motives to regulate and influence a creature endued with reason, understanding, and volition. All that is necessary in the government of such a creature as man is, that the law should be equitable, and that man should be originally possessed of faculties which rendered him capable of obedience. Were we to go further, and suppose that the Governor was obliged to see

* Lam. iii. 39. † Eccles. vii. 29. ‡ Rom. v. 18.

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his law fulfilled, this would make him accountable to his own law, while the accountability of the creature would be destroyed. If the creature, besides having a righteous law and powers capable of obedience, must also be kept from the possibility of disobeying, the rule would return back, and become binding upon him that gave, rather than upon him that received it. Though I feel incompetent to go far into this subject, yet, from what we know of the nature of God and of man, it may be safely affirmed that it cannot be required of the Divine Governor to secure the obedience of his creatures, any further than the law, as a motive, is calculated to have an effect upon rational minds. On what ground, then, can it be imagined that the world has a right to require God to prevent, or to remedy, moral evil?

3. The whole of those evils that form clouds and darkness round about God, are either the penal or natural effects of moral evil. The terrors of conscience, the fears of death, restlessness and dissatisfaction of mind; these and numerous other evils, are partly the natural, and partly the penal consequence of sin; and shew that man is not in the state in which he was originally created, but is reduced by his disobedience to a state in which all things are "vanity and vexation of spirit."

With respect to evils of a physical nature, most of them are evident consequences of the state of man as a sinner. What is war, strife, contention, but the effect of evil passions; the natural fruits of apostasy? These are the actions and workings

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of the evil mind, malice, envy, pride and covetousness. The sentiment of love, which unites to God, being broken, what effects can be produced but dissension and disorder—domestic, national, and universal! There is, indeed, less disorder and confusion than might be expected from the universality of the apostasy; the wisdom and goodness of God having checked a great proportion of the evil that would have proceeded from the corrupt fountain of our depravity. We can never sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of God for such institutions as preserve a tolerable degree of order in this fallen world. Many benefits result from those checks and restraints which are imposed upon men, even when the heart is not renewed.

But still further. God has established another kingdom in the midst of the kingdoms of the world. He has created a new race among the race of men; the men who are the "salt of the earth," and the "light of the world." They prevent that universal corruption which would work its ruin, and that darkness which would tend to destruction. Yet there is much darkness and corruption remaining: and if you ask how long it will continue, the prophet answers, "Until the Spirit be poured on us from on high;"* that is, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only thing which can correct the evils that prevail among mankind. This grace is not conferred by the Divine Being in the character of a governor, but as the fruit of his favour: it is, however, the only cure; and

* Isaiah xxxii. 15.

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hence, the most intense desires should possess our minds for the promotion of the gospel,—not only that God may be glorified in the highest, but that on earth there may be peace and good-will among men.

4. Those that receive the grace of Jesus Christ are still in such a situation as renders a great part of their trials and miseries necessary. Many of the evils of a depraved nature still remain, and need to be subdued and removed. Pride must be abased; "covetousness, which is idolatry," abhorred; impurities cleansed; and malevolent passions conquered. This is a state of probation; and it is repugnant to reason to talk of a state of probation in which nothing is met with that is dark and painful. Besides, the virtues of the christian must be perfected in the same way in which the Captain of our Salvation was perfected: he must be conformed to Christ, and have fellowship with him in his sufferings. Jesus Christ is set forth as a type of all the happiness that accrues from suffering, from struggling, and from conquering; and we must resemble him in this respect. To this purpose our present state is adapted; every thing is so contrived as to afford opportunities of conquest. The pleasures of the world, the crosses of life, the remains of concupiscence, the venom of the "old serpent," and the insults, if not persecutions, of the wicked, are enemies by which we are beset; and we recover from their assaults, and overcome, by the exercise of prayer, vigilance, and persevering struggles. "There is no discharge in this

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warfare,"—we must conquer or die. God will confer no distinction (I will not say, but where it is deserved) but only where it may be given as a recompense for service. The design of Christ is to raise his people to glory, to communicate to them the fulness of God; but as he obtained these blessings by his death, as he purchased them by his blood, so in the same path he leads on his people to his glory. Thus he makes all our afflictions and enemies preparatives to our victory and triumph. The Divine Being will display his infinite wisdom in leading his people through the wilderness: and they shall walk "in white," with "palms in their hands," and crowns on their heads, who "come up out of great tribulation."*

5. The moral evils of man, and the depravity of human nature, are often, in a great measure, corrected and subdued by the natural evils of life, and thus are made the means of conducting to repentance, reformation, and happiness. The Spirit is not generally given to lead the soul to God and the enjoyment of a life of faith, without being preceded by affliction and troubles. He leads into the wilderness, and then speaks kindly unto man; he destroys our idols, hedges up our way, surrounds us with difficulties, and pleads with us. Thus he deals with individuals, and thus also with nations at large. "When his judgements are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof learn righteousness." The overflowing of a corrupt opulence, the abundance of prosperity, feeds, as in a hotbed, all

* Rev. vii. 9, 14.

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the bad passions of the heart. The sword, pestilence, poverty, pain, and innumerable other evils, excite us to deep and serious reflection, and thus prepare us, by the influence of the gospel, and the operation of grace, to return to God. A sense of a superior hand is felt; the vanity of the world is discovered; the soul looks out for something on which to rest, and is prepared to hear the voice that says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." I doubt not but the cloud now gathering, and the judgements now about to descend, will be the means of casting down high thoughts, and "humbling the lofty looks of man, that the Lord alone may be exalted," and that the world may be filled with his glory. One temple of the Holy Ghost is of more esteem in his sight than all the splendour of palaces, than all the riches of the world. Jesus Christ is overthrowing all the grandeur of man, that he may gather out of ruinous heaps, and from a perishing world, the materials of an imperishable temple. He is taking out of every nation a people whom he will form for his praise. In his providence he is subverting, scattering, destroying, in order that he may find stones to polish for a temple into which he will enter, into which his Father will enter, and where they will abide. This is the one great end the King of Righteousness has in view. The preparatory scenes of the world are as a "valley full of bones, very many and very dry;"* but the Spirit of the Lord shall raise out of them a people upon whom he will breathe, and

* Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14.

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they shall live and become a glorious army, animated by the heavenly grace. How is it possible, if we see things only with carnal eyes, that we should see them as God sees them, who directs all things with a view to an eternal state of being? Our "light affliction" may work for us a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal." * It is only by looking at "things unseen and eternal," that we can derive true benefit from the miseries of life. Under the hand of God every thing is propelled, every thing temporal is rushing forward to give way to, or to be united with, that which is eternal. This is the developement of the whole plan, the explication of all the complicated movements of providence. Look at the things which are eternal: there is the state to which we are tending, where we shall know in perfection what we now know only in part, and shall be satisfied that all has been conducted agreeably to the known character of God.

6. Yet, let it be observed, even here the light of prophecy dispels many of those clouds which would otherwise obscure, for the present, the government and the throne of the Deity. We are assured that in the latter day the gospel will be more widely disseminated, that its influence will be more extensive and efficacious, that the superstitious

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

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prejudices and vices, by which it has been so long opposed will give way; that the desert and the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and "shall blossom as the rose;"* that all the kingdoms of the earth shall bring their riches and glory into the church, the whole earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord, and there shall be peace unto the ends of the earth. At what period this glory of the latter day will commence, is not for us to determine; it is generally agreed the time draws near; how long it will last is, again, not easy to tell. The thousand years are perhaps to be calculated upon the same scale as other prophecies, wherein a day stands for a year, which would make them more than three hundred and sixty thousand years. Be this as it may, at that period the Spirit will be poured down from on high; the potsherds of the earth that have been striving, will be dashed to pieces; the great Proprietor will come to fashion them anew: then "the fruitful field will be as a forest," and the forest "as the garden of God;"† none shall destroy in all God's holy mountain; the sacred influence of piety will bring us back to a paradisaical state; the love, the harmony, the plenty which will abound, will fill every heart with gladness; the temple of God shall be among men, the marriage of the Lamb will come; and the universal song will be, "Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" ‡

If this period shall continue long, the miseries that once reigned will be forgotten, and all the disorder that was introduced by the fall will be as

* Isai. xxxv. 1. † Isai. xxxii. 15.; li. 3. ‡ Rev. xix. 6.

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nothing, when compared with the joy of the restoration; the creation of a "new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall reign."

"Behold, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; but who can abide the day of his coming?" He will come with his "fan in his hand." "He will sit like a refiner of silver." The chaff will be separated from the wheat; the visitations of the Almighty will find out his enemies; the phials of his indignation will be poured out upon the opposers of the gospel; wrath will come upon them in this world, preparatory to that of the eternal state. Let us "flee from the wrath to come." Let us consider the salvation of the soul to be the one thing needful. The body is only the tenement in which the soul is lodged, the case in which it is enclosed; the soul is all important; "the redemption of it is precious;" "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

The gospel is the only refuge to which we can flee. It presents Christ crucified among you, shedding his blood as an atonement for your sin, willing to "save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." O my friends, accept his grace; break off from every sin; ask yourselves in what you have offended; set your sins in order before you; remembering that if you do not, Christ will do it at the great day. Judge yourselves now, that you may not hereafter be judged

* Mark viii. 36, 37.

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and sent to condemnation. Turn with humble penitence to the cross of Christ, and approach God by him; bend your knee before the throne of grace, plead the merits of the Redeemer's blood, and be "reconciled by his death."

May God grant you these blessings for the sake of his Son. Amen.

VII.

ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF PIOUS MEN.*

[PREACHED AT BEDFORD, MAY, 1815.]

NUMBERS xxi. 4.—*And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.*

IT is generally understood and believed that the Old Testament is in great part typical. The history of the deliverance of Israel is a type of redemption by Jesus Christ; the paschal lamb a type of the great Passover. The journey of the people through the wilderness represented our pilgrimage through this world; and the land of Canaan was a shadow of the heavenly rest. Viewed in this light, many parts afford direction and consolation peculiarly suited to individual experience.

I shall take leave to accommodate this passage as an expression of what frequently befalls the

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Samuel Hillyard.

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people of God in this world; their "souls are greatly discouraged, because of the way."

The present life is a way; it is not the end of our being: it is not our rest, it is not our abode; but the place of our pilgrimage, a passage to eternity.

There are two ways; the way to heaven, marked out by the example of Christ, and the way to perdition, marked out by an evil world. But there are many discouragements that the christian meets with, though he is in the way to heaven. These we shall point out in the first place, and then direct you to some considerations to remove these discouragements.

I. I shall point out the discouragements in the way; and, in doing this, I shall keep my eye on the pilgrimage of the people who were originally referred to in the text.

1. The way is circuitous, and therefore discouraging. This is suggested in the beginning of this verse: "And they journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom;" they took a way which was round about, which added to the tediousness of their journey. Their nearest route would have made it comparatively easy; but, instead of taking this, they went up and down in the wilderness. When we consider what God had done for this people in Egypt, it might have been expected that all the way would have been prosperous; that joy would have been heard in their tents, and triumph attended their march; and it would have been seen that they were the people of God by the blessings

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which they enjoyed: but, instead of this, they met with delays, hinderances, and troubles, till they murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Why were we brought out hither? Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt."* Thus, souls that are brought to Jesus, and delivered from the slavery of sin and the curse of the law, in their first ardour overlook trials, and think of nothing but enjoyments; they do not anticipate the fightings and fears that are the portion of God's Israel. After a time, through want of watchfulness and care, the love of their espousals begins to decline, the world regains a degree of influence, the Spirit is grieved, and they fear God has become their enemy: they seem to themselves to go backward, and, indeed, are in danger of doing so, if they neglect to watch and pray; and much time is spent in mourning, retracing, and recovering, the ground that has been lost. This is too common a course: there is provision made for something better; there are promises and comforts which should encourage us to advance from strength to strength; but, through our neglects, we feel that we go backward instead of forward, and are therefore discouraged.

2. The way is through a wilderness, and is, therefore, discouraging. Moses reminded Israel of this, in Deuteronomy: "You remember how you went through the wilderness, a waste land, not sown or tilled, where there was no trace of human footsteps, and where no man dwelled." A wilder-

* Exod. xvi. 3.

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ness is distinguished by the absence of necessary sustenance: there was no corn, nor vine, nor olive; nothing to sustain life. Thus this world is a state of great privations; men are often literally straitened with poverty, penury and sorrow, and know not how to conduct themselves in their difficulties: the supplies which they once had may be exhausted; and, though they have seen the hand of God in affording them what was necessary on former occasions, they are ready to say, Though the rock has supplied us, and the manna has descended, yet "can God spread a table for us in the wilderness?" With respect to the blessings of this life, they live by faith, and frequently have no provision or prospect for futurity.

But, in a spiritual sense, this world is also a wilderness. It has no natural tendency to nourish the spiritual life; nothing is derived from it of that kind: though spiritual blessings are enjoyed in it, the christian knows they are not the produce of the soil; the "bread" which he eats "cometh down from heaven;" the perpetual exhibition and communication of that one bread is all his support. Jesus Christ says, "I am the Bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead; but he that eateth of this bread shall never die. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."* The ordinances of the gospel do not support and comfort us any farther than there is a heavenly communication and influence attending them. This is not peculiar to the poor:

* John vi. 48—50, 55.

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the rich, who abound in worldly things, feel that this is a wilderness to their souls; they feel that there is something to which earthly treasures are not suited; wants which they cannot supply. The same bread that feeds the poor must feed them, or they will be lean from day to day: on this they depend as much as the meanest around them. David felt this when he said, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land."* "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. When shall I come and appear before God?"† "Deliver me from the men of this world, who have their portion in this life." "Then shall I be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."‡ There was nothing on earth to satisfy him; he felt the present world to be a wilderness, because it was a state of absence from the divine presence. The christian is a child of promise and of hope, and his eye is directed to the "glory that shall be revealed."

Again: there is much intricacy in the christian's pilgrimage. There were no paths in the wilderness; the Israelites could not have explored their way but by the direction of the pillar of fire and of the cloud: so the christian knows not how to explore his path. There are doctrinal difficulties by which we are perplexed, and errors to which we are continually exposed, and which we know not how to escape but by attention to "the light that shineth in a dark place." There are voices that are heard

* Psalm cxliii. 6. † Psalm xlii. 1, 2. ‡ Psalm xvii. 15.

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in the wilderness, crying, "Lo here," and "Lo there;" but we must not go after them: we must "search the Scriptures,"* and ask the guidance of the Spirit, or we shall never have the comfort that arises from right views of truth, nor hear the "voice behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." I need not mention the various errors of the present day; but simply specify the two chief, which are, such a view of the doctrines of grace as destroys the necessity of holiness; and such a view of the Saviour as destroys the notion of grace. There are also many difficulties in practical religion; and thus we are again in danger of mistake. What shall we do to serve and please God? The general rules of scripture are sufficient, if studied with a humble mind, for general direction; but they do not furnish us with immediate and particular directions in all cases: diligent inquiry is necessary, attending to the voice of conscience, giving up sensual desires and inclinations, and rejecting temptations presented in various forms. There is only one grand remedy, if we would walk aright: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."†

3. The way lies through a hostile country, and is, therefore, discouraging. We pass through an enemy's land. The Israelites went up in military array, marching in file; and they had not proceeded far before the kings of Edom and Moab, and the Ammonite, opposed them. They were obliged to

* John v. 39. † James i. 5.

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unite the courage of the military with the assiduity of the pilgrim's life; they had to fight as well as travel. And so must we: on our pilgrimage we must gird on "the whole armour of God, taking the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith;"* we must conquer as well as advance; we must fight our way, or die. There are three great enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil: these are allied, have perfect understanding with each other against us, and combine their efforts for our destruction. The christian pilgrim becomes a marked character in the world; he dwells alone: the men around him take the alarm; they endeavour to imbitter his choice and retard his progress. Satan is also alarmed, and he is never found to give up a subject without opposition.

A man going on in a carnal course will scarcely believe in Satan's temptations; he regards it as mere enthusiasm to think or speak of them; he has not felt them, and will not think they can be felt: but the christian soon learns that he has to fight against "principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness." He finds his enemy assault him in various ways, and knows that he "must be resisted that he may fly from us;"† for "he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."‡ The flesh is also an enemy. The christian experiences the workings of carnality, a hankering after that which is evil, and to which he may have been addicted; as the Israelites after "the onions and garlic of Egypt." There is a tendency towards earth, as well as towards heaven; a principle that depresses

* Ephes. vi. 13—17. † James iv. 7. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 8.

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and bends him downwards, as well as one that elevates and prompts him to soar above: he is forced to complain of "cleaving to the dust," and cannot always say, "My soul followeth hard after God." "There is a law in the members warring against the law of his mind."* He complains of "an evil heart of unbelief." There is in him an army with two banners; "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh:"† this renders it necessary that our life should be a continual struggle. These conflicts belong to every condition. Those that have most of the world are often most exposed, and are seldom less exempt than others from assaults; and no wonder that hereby christians are often discouraged, especially when they feel they do not always succeed. Even when they are not vanquished, they sometimes lose ground; and when they have overcome, they are afraid of fresh conflicts, in which their strength may fail, and their enemies gain the advantage.

4. The false steps that are taken in the pilgrimage, and the consequent displeasure of God, are discouraging: there are so many errors and iniquities for which the Lord chastens his people, though he pardons sin as to its eternal consequences. How often did the children of Israel offend God and awaken his anger? and where is the son whom the Lord does not see fit to chasten? These chastenings of the Lord often drink up the spirit; they overwhelm the soul. "All thy waves and billows are gone over me."‡ They think of

* Rom. vii. 23. † Gal. v. 17. ‡ Psalm xlii. 7.

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God, and are afraid. They cry, "Oh, be not a terror unto me,"* lest I suffer thy frown and be distracted. The bitter herbs are unpalatable; the fears of hell seize hold of them as terribly as when they were first awakened to a sense of sin and danger; they feel their frailty and tendency to depart from God; and they apprehend future trials, and know not how long the painful dispensation will continue. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever; doth his promise fail for evermore?"†

5. Total defection of men from the path is a great discouragement to those who still continue in the way. I do not think that all who died in the wilderness were cut off as rebels; indeed it could not be, for Moses and Aaron were of the number: yet they were set forth as types to warn us of the danger of not entering into rest. Here was a shadow of the greater loss of them that "turn back to perdition." How many can we recollect of those who were once active and zealous in the cause of God, that have gone away and walked no more with Christ, of whom we say, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it,"‡ "to turn again to the beggarly elements of this world!"§

Providence sets a mark upon such persons: their idols are snatched from them, and they become as pillars of salt to remind us of the danger of looking behind us. What deep searchings of heart are hereby occasioned! "I also shall fall by the hand

* Jer. xvii. 17.
† Psalm lxxvii. 8.
‡ 2 Pet. ii. 21.
§ Gal. iv. 9.

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of" the enemy; I have in me a similar nature with his, and may be exposed to similar temptations. "Lord, hold me up," or I shall not be safe. Nothing weakens the confidence of the christian army more than the failure of those who appeared brave in the day of battle, and conspicuous in the ranks. When ministers and eminent professors fall away, our hands hang down; we suspect others; we are jealous of ourselves. "Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* "Every one must give an account of himself to God,"† and "let every one have rejoicing in himself, and not in another."‡

6. The *length* of the way is discouraging. The time occupied by the Israelites from their entering to their leaving the wilderness, was forty years. Thus long were Caleb and Joshua in travelling through it. This was a tedious journey; such a one as was never performed before: a type of the journeys of the church militant. The whole of human life, with all its toils and cares, is comprehended in this journey; there is no rest, no cessation of the pilgrim state, till life is finished. "Be thou faithful unto death," or all thy former toil is lost and will be of no avail. Now, though human life is short in itself, yet to our limited conception it appears long; especially when passed in suffering and pain, "when the clouds return after the rain," and there is none to tell us "how long." In protracted afflictions is seen the patience of the saints.

* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. † Rom. xiv. 12. ‡ Gal. vi. 4.

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It is more easy to endure the greatest shocks of trouble, than to endure those pains which are more moderate, for a long season. Patience is worn away by continued afflictions, rather than overwhelmed by the rolling wave. Those saints, who endure in private, though unknown, and perhaps unnoticed by their neighbours, are the bravest heroes of the christian camp. We must, my brethren, hold out unto the end. We must touch the goal, or we run in vain: our last effort must be made in this journey, or we shall never reach the Canaan that lieth beyond the waters of the grave.

Thus I have given you a serious representation of difficulties and trials; and it may appear discouraging to many: the people of God are much discouraged at times, when they know not how long they shall have to walk and be weary. But there is another view of our pilgrimage: it is not wise to hide our eyes from trials; let us, therefore, consider them well; yet let us, at the same time, inquire whether among these scenes there are not interspersed motives to support, encourage, and animate our minds.

II. I shall now, therefore, endeavour to direct you to some considerations to remove your discouragements.

1. Remember, the way you are in, believer, is "a right way," notwithstanding all that has been said. Infinite Wisdom has ordained it: and if you reach the end, you will be well repaid for all your toil, and will admire the whole of the pilgrimage: no sorrow will appear to have been too heavy; no

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path too gloomy. There was no bitter ingredient in your cup that could have been spared; no affliction but what operated to promote the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." You will look back and acknowledge that Infinite Wisdom directed the darkest path, and caused it to terminate in joy and glory unutterable. This is the way in which many have been conducted that are now in glory; they are gone up out of "great tribulation." There is a "great cloud of witnesses," who, "through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises:" let us also, with patience, "run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame."* Take the prophets and ancient saints as examples of suffering: think how they were tried. Remember the prison of Joseph, the reproach of Moses, the dungeon of Jeremiah, and the death of Isaiah. "Remember the patience of Job" under all his afflictions. God has heated the furnace for some of the most eminent saints seven times more than common, because they were endued with a divine power of suffering with patience, and were favoured with the presence of the Son of God. The people of God have been chosen in the furnace of affliction; the bush has been on fire, but not consumed, for God was in the midst to preserve it; and he not only preserves his saints, but gradually conforms them to his Son Jesus, who himself suffered: for this purpose he came into the world and united

* Heb. xii. 1, 2.

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himself to human nature; wherefore arm yourselves with the same mind. Our sufferings are necessary, to wean us from the world and to deliver us from sin: "he that hath suffered is free from sin."* We must either suffer by self-denial, or be chastised of the Lord. "If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me:"† let him behold both the cross and the crown, and never turn aside from that path which leads to the crown, whatever cross he may have to bear. A man of this world, who is governed by sensual inclinations, and seeks after vain pleasures, is "dead while he lives."‡ This was not the course of our Master; and, be it remembered, it is he who says, "Let him follow *me*."

2. Another encouragement is, that God is with his people in the way. He was with Israel to guide and defend them. They had visible tokens of his presence, and saw that he stretched out his arm for their protection, and the overthrow of their adversaries. Thus also, when Jesus sent forth his disciples, he said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."§ If he lays upon our shoulders the heavy cross, he supplies unction for the bruises it occasions. If he leads into the wilderness, he "speaks comfortably;" he spreads a table there, "and his banner over us is love." "Greater is he that is with you than all that are against you." God is in the world as the great upholder, governor, and benefactor; but he is in

* 1 Pet. iv. 1.
† Matt. xvi. 24.
‡ 1 Tim. v. 6.
§ Matt. xxviii. 20.

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the church by his special grace, as a vital principle, an ever-living friend to sustain, animate, and influence. With him we have communion, and from him communications of mercy. We are one with him; all our need shall be supplied: "as our days, so shall our strength be."* We may know not how to meet an expected trial; but grace shall come, and be all sufficient for us. Only keep your face Zion-ward, and "though the young men faint, and are weary" in waiting upon the Lord, you shall "renew your strength, mount upon wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint."† "His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness." "When I am weak, then am I strong;"‡ most gladly, therefore, will I "glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him who loved us."§ Only look not behind you, think not of turning back, and he "will never leave you nor forsake you."

3. To overcome the discouragements of the way, remember there is no other way that leads to heaven. You cannot reconcile the service of sin and the world with the hope of heaven and the enjoyment of everlasting life in that holy state, and in the presence of the holy God. Will you, then, forego the hope of Canaan; as you must when you yield to sin, when you give yourselves to the world? There is no other way to heaven than the way to which the Scriptures of truth direct

* Deut. xxxiii. 25.
† Isaiah xl. 31.
‡ 2 Cor. xii. 10.
§ Rom. viii. 37.

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you. You must "crucify the flesh;" you must "purify yourselves" by faith through the Spirit; you must be conformed to the Saviour; you must take up the trials of life with patience, or look for the punishment of death. The choice of Moses was truly wise; it was the only choice wisdom *could* make. Happy are they who choose like him; Canaan shall be for ever theirs. The Land of Promise was but a type, a shadow, of their inheritance: it was a perishable inheritance; it was but a mere span, a moment of happiness and glory, compared with that which shall be revealed, of which, at present, we can only say we know but in part: for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."* A few moments there will banish all earthly trials from your mind; or you shall remember them only to enhance your bliss. The enemy, like the Egyptians in the Red Sea, shall be seen no more. The trials of the saints shall be left far behind, and sin shall never vex them again. How will this happiness repay all their toil! how sweet will be the remembrance of the bitterest herbs! how unspeakable and inconceivable the joy, when they shall be with angels, and justified spirits, and Christ, and God, in the kingdom of glory! We are lost in the contemplation of this sublime subject; yet we know that future happiness is greater than eye hath seen or ear hath heard. How should it transport us to think that we may be counted worthy of this high

* 1 John iii. 2.

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calling; that God hath revealed to us this glory! It is only by Jesus Christ and his gospel that "life and immortality are brought to light." It is by God's becoming man, that man may become like God, a partaker of the divine nature. Let us not, my brethren, deem ourselves unworthy; let us not sit down content with inferior things, like Esau, who, for "one mess of pottage, sold his birthright." It is infinitely better to suffer in this life, than to lie down in death. Go forward, then, christian; go forward: "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before."

I pray God that these plain truths may be blessed to your souls; that you may be stirred up to diligent perseverance in the ways of God; that you may be a comfort to the minister whom God hath placed over you; and that he may present you with joy at the coming of Jesus Christ. And, if any of you have not yet entered on this way, to such we would affectionately say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Come, ye careless ones, "ye simple ones, turn in hither." You think not of death, but of the gaieties of life; you walk after the desire of your hearts and the delight of your eyes: but there is no happiness in your path; if you proceed, you *must* perish; for it leadeth to destruction. All your pleasure is but for a moment; there is more true pleasure in the roughest path of the christian than in the smoothest road you find: you will never have peace, consolation, or rest, till you come to

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the Saviour. Come, and he will do you good: you shall have all the innocent enjoyments of life that will be for your real comfort; all your trials shall be ordered by wisdom and love; you shall have the best support in the day of adversity, and, in the life to come, everlasting glory. "All things shall be yours;" Christ your Saviour, and God, the Creator of the universe, your God and Father.

We do not know what you may meet with by the way, nor what you shall enjoy in the end; but what we enjoy, you shall enjoy. God will remember you "with the favour that he beareth to his own people, and visit you with his salvation." O, that every one might come! None would be turned away without the blessing: there is room enough; "there is bread enough and to spare." We invite, nay entreat you, to leave those muddy streams, which must be given back in tears of repentance. Come and taste of the "water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."* Come and partake of these blessings. While you delay, your danger increases; if you utterly refuse, you perish! "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."†

* Rev. xxii. 1. † Rev. xxii. 17.

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VIII.

THE VANITY OF MAN APART FROM HIS IMMORTALITY.*

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, AUGUST, 1815.]

PSALM lxxxix. 47.—*Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*

THE Psalm in which these words occur is supposed to have been written on occasion of the calamities which befell the kingdom of Israel in the reign of Rehoboam; and the Psalmist appears to have been lamenting those distressing events by which the glory of David's family seemed to be extinguished. In the bitterness of his feelings, he is carried out from the particular occasion which excited them, to a general contemplation of the vanity of human existence. From these words I propose to shew, that,—considered merely in his present state, apart from any reference to eternity and the prospect disclosed by revelation,—man (it may be truly said) is "made in vain."

1. The first thing that strikes us, in such a survey of our being, as circumscribed within the term of mortality, is *the shortness of its duration.* "Remember *how short my time is.*" This circumstance, which cannot have escaped, or failed to affect, any reflecting person, is frequently adverted

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield, A.M. of Clifton.

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to by the sacred writers. "My days," says Job, "are swifter than a post: they are passed away as a shadow." "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: as for man, his days are as grass: in the morning it is green; in the evening it is cut down and withered." The transient nature of his existence stamps an inexpressible meanness on man, if we confine our view to the present life; and forces us to confess that, laying aside the hope of immortality, "every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity."

2. The same reflection must have occurred to most persons of a thoughtful character, when they have contemplated *the general state of that world* in which we are placed: the mischief and misery that pervade it; the disorder and desolation which the unruly passions of men perpetually introduce; the wantonness with which they rush to deeds of violence and injustice; the almost incessant national contentions, in which the destruction of one part of the human race seems to become the business and sport of the other. Whether the balance of good or of evil preponderate on the whole, is a question we may here leave undecided. In some more favoured conditions of society, it is probable there may be a predominance of good; in others, less favoured, of evil: but that such a question should exist at all is itself a sufficient proof how much evil exists in this world. Viewed, therefore, merely as they are here, and excluding

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the supposition of a future state, all men will appear to be "made in vain."

3. Again, when we recollect how many thousands of our species are born the *subjects of some inherent, incurable disease or imperfection of body,* such as may be said to render their life a protracted malady;—when we call to mind how many are constitutionally the victims of dejected spirits and a morbid melancholy, such as cast a gloom over every surrounding object, and dim their perceptions to the fairest scenes of life and nature; (a case which is exemplified in the great and amiable Cowper;) we are compelled to acknowledge of the multitude so circumstanced, that,—if we consider them merely as existing in that hypothetical state which terminates with death,—they also are "made in vain."

4. And farther, when we take into the account those millions of mankind, who are condemned, through the whole of life, to *manual and mechanical labours;* whose day after day is consumed in a constant round of the same unvaried employment,—the twisting of a thread,—the continuing the friction of a wheel,—the exercise of the file, the saw, or the hammer, and similar operations, which have so little concern with mind, so little tendency to engage the intellectual powers by which man is distinguished from the surrounding creatures, that they are as well, if not better, performed by various machines of modern invention;—who, that limits his view of man to this sublunary scene, can forbear to sympathise with the desponding Psalmist in

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the text? In labours like these he observes millions of those beings are employed, who are created with a mind capable of looking backward and forward with endless activity of thought,—capable of comprehending truth and advancing in knowledge,—capable of enjoying a happiness commensurate with its own vast desires. The inheritors of such faculties are employed in labours like these; in the performance of which, after the practice of a few years, they attain such a facility and perfection, that no room is left for improvement; and for the rest of life nothing remains but the repetition of the self-same labours;—labours in which the mind is altogether passive and dormant, nor is any exercise afforded to the reason or the affections. Not that I would be understood to censure the mechanism of civilized society, which evidently requires this arrangement in a greater or less degree: but, walk the streets of a commercial or manufacturing city; observe the multiplicity of handicraft occupations which meet your eye at every point; and, without blaming the existing organization of society, I ask whether, —if cares like these are to engage the chief part of human attention, (cares rendered, perhaps, necessary by the imperfection of our present circumstances, but immensely disproportioned to the capacity of our nature,)—if men are condemned to terminate their existence in these pursuits, and are not reserved for another and higher state of being, I ask whether the great majority of mankind are not "made in vain?"

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5. But there are those, it may be said, who do not fall under this melancholy representation;—*men of wealth, minions of fortune,* who bask in her smiles and revel in her favours; whose circumstances seem to be formed by their will, and who appropriate whatever they desire. Surely, you will say, such "men of this world *have* their portion in *this* life;" surely an existence like theirs, even if we suppose it confined to earth, apart from any ulterior consideration, has a sufficient end in itself; and, though their existence is short, they are exempt from the charge of having been "made in vain." Now there is a delusion in this view: and if we examine the advantages which men of wealth possess over others, we shall find that nearly all the pleasures peculiar to superfluous opulence are reducible to two classes; the class of *sensual gratifications,* and that of *ambitious distinctions.*

(1.) And first, with regard to the *gratifications of sense* which the rich have at their command; how little *these* can be said to redeem their possessors from the lot of a vain existence,—how little *these* conduce to supply that happiness which is the end and perfection of our being,—will appear by the following considerations.

The pleasures of sense, in the first place, can never be proposed as an adequate end of our creation; because, in pursuing them, we always regard them as subordinate to something of superior importance, our regard to which is allowed to be the just rule of sensual indulgence. The inferiority of these pleasures to something beyond

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and above themselves is never doubted: a wise man advises a proper abstinence from such pleasures for the sake of *health;* a good man, for the sake of *virtue;* either of which is justly regarded as an object superior to that which it ought to regulate. But the true end of existence must be something final, something beyond which nothing can be proposed as of superior magnitude: and unless there be alleged some worthier object of our creation than one which is thus referred to another which has a right to supersede it, it cannot be disproved that "men are made in vain."

Besides which, let it be recollected, in the next place, that the pleasures of sense, pursued beyond a certain limit, so far from tending to create happiness, tend to destroy it, by the very construction of those organs which are the instruments of sensual enjoyment. That craving after happiness which every bosom feels, and the satisfaction of which involves the perfection of our existence, cannot be supposed to attain its proper object in any of those animal pleasures, of which the pursuit (unless kept in continual check) leads to the extinction of happiness and existence itself. The proper object of this grand desire of our nature must be something, in the pursuit of which we may safely let loose the utmost energy and ardour of the soul; something essentially, entirely, and eternally good, in the pursuit of which we need not fear lest we should injure ourselves, but may reckon upon benefit and success proportioned to our zeal and diligence,—the pursuit of

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such an object constituting, in effect, the proper business of our being.

And in the third and last place, the enjoyments of the senses cannot present to *human* beings the appropriate and distinguishing end of their existence, because they are only enjoyed by man in common with the lower animals. *That*, whatever it be, which forms the true end of *human* existence, must be something which is adapted to the great peculiarities of our nature as *rational* and *moral* beings: but sensual fruition is received in an equal, perhaps a greater degree, by the brutes. To what purpose this comprehensiveness of reason, this prodigality of powers, this grasp of memory, this vigour of imagination, this restless activity of hope and desire, if the inheritor of such high endowments were doomed to seek the perfection of his existence in the command of sensual gratifications? Few, in fact, are so infatuated as to believe that such gratifications are the end of their creation. Notwithstanding the ardour with which the pleasures of sense are pursued by many, still they are always regarded (at least where society is not unusually depraved) as matter of shame and concealment to their votaries; all thinking persons are anxious to redeem their character from the degrading imputation of devoted sensuality, by intermingling other and worthier pursuits with pleasures of this description: and he who should abandon himself, in the gratification of animal propensities, to the neglect of every higher aim, would be universally allowed to have lived "in vain."

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(2.) But there is another class of pleasures, as was observed, with the command of which wealth supplies us; the *pleasures of ambition*,—the respect and homage which are paid to high station and splendid circumstance. Now, on an examination of these pleasures, it will be found that they are unreal and imaginary,—that they consist of nothing more than a fiction of the imagination, a false elation of the mind, by which we may be said to *identify* ourselves, or to be identified by others, with all those varied instruments of pleasure which affluence commands; by which we *diffuse* ourselves (as it were) over the whole sphere in which we preside. Of those who place their happiness in pleasures of this class it may be most emphatically said, that "they walk in a *vain shew:*" and could we assign no better end of our being than that which thus places it in a mere *delusion*,—a false *semblance* of enjoyment,—we should be reduced to confess that "all men are made in vain."

Thus it appears that neither the pleasures of sense, nor those of ambition, (to the one or the other of which classes all the pleasures of wealth are reducible,) afford any adequate account of our existence as confined to the present scene; and that *men of wealth* are not, more than others, exempt from the mournful charge of the Psalmist.

6. To proceed. Neither can we exempt from the same condition *men of knowledge*, who pass life in the cultivation of intellect and the pursuit of truth;—an object, it must be allowed, better

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suited to the nature, and better proportioned to the dignity of man as a rational being, than those before mentioned;—an object which too many, it is to be feared, have in every age regarded as the very highest which they could propose to themselves, as characteristic of a state beyond which they could aspire to none more exalted, and in which, if they could but escape from all intrusions of passion and accident, they would be completely happy, they would desire no higher order of existence.

That the favourite pleasures of such men,—the pleasures of knowledge and intellect,—are noble in their nature, exquisite in their degree, and permanent in their continuance, will not be denied by those who have sufficiently experienced, and who are competent to estimate them. But, in the first place, to how *few* are these pleasures confined! What a mere scantling of the race is qualified to enjoy them in any considerable degree! Not one person in a thousand has either the abilities or the opportunities requisite to their high enjoyment; while to the rest, to the great bulk of mankind, they are the hidden treasures of a sealed book. And can *that* be supposed the final object of our being, which can be enjoyed but by a small proportion of those who inherit that being? Is it to be conceived that, while the million are "made in vain," only here and there a chosen individual is permitted to attain a destiny worthy of his nature? The truth is, of the few who make knowledge the aim of their engagements, none

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can secure himself from the intrusion of disturbing passions or distressing accidents. It is only in the smooth expanse of the lake, when there is no wind to agitate its bosom, that the forms of surrounding nature are reflected clear and unbroken: and thus it is only where the mind is in a state of undisturbed tranquillity, that the pleasures of science and literature can be pursued with success. But the lights of philosophy are liable to be broken by the waves of adversity, and darkened by the clouds of grief; the man of study is obnoxious to the same external privations,—of health, friends, or fortune,—with other men: the invasions of calamity, to which all are exposed, will find him out in the most sequestered retreat; and, after all, he will be feelingly convinced that, if knowledge be the end of our being, and that being terminates on earth,—he, like all other men, has been "made in vain."

Besides which, we have it on the testimony of one of the greatest proficients in knowledge that ever appeared among men, that "increase of knowledge," far from being increase of happiness, "is increase of sorrow." And though this proposition may require to be received with some limitations, certain it is that the mere *knowledge* of things, the mere *perception* of truth, is something extremely different,—something entirely separable,—from the *enjoyment* of things, the *possession of real happiness*. There is not, between the two, the slightest necessary connexion: there may exist, in the same character, the scantiest portion of the one in union

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with the largest measure of the other. We by no means find that, the more things we know, the more we enjoy our existence; and the simple reason is, that knowledge has its abode in the *understanding*, while happiness is seated not in the understanding, but in the *heart;* so that the condition of the rudest peasant may be an object of envy to the most enlightened philosopher. In a word,—happiness is a state which we are *all* equally concerned to attain; but wealth and knowledge are conditions accessible only to a *few*. Happiness has its seat in the *heart;* but wealth and knowledge are not adapted to satisfy our *affections:* therefore wealth or knowledge cannot be supposed to constitute that proper happiness of man, without which he is "made in vain."

7. Once more. There yet remains another and a yet more elevated order of men, who place the grand object of their being in *religion;* who think of God, trust in God, and, on all occasions, devote themselves to do the will of God: men who, receiving the Scriptures as His own divine revelation, conceive that they are pardoned and accepted by their heavenly Father, through the mediation of the Son of his love; conceive that they are renewed and influenced by the power of His Spirit; and, regarding the "things which are seen and temporal" as preparatory to those which are "unseen and eternal," "set their affections on things above, not on things of the earth;" consider themselves as "dead to the world, and their life as hid with Christ in God; and trust that when

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He who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with Him in glory." What shall we say of such persons? We say that, if this were the only state of being ordained for man, *they*, like others, would be "made in vain:" we say, with the desponding Psalmist, "Verily, they have cleansed their hearts in vain, and in vain washed their hands in innocence:" we affirm, with the apostle Paul himself, "If in *this* life only they have hope, they are of all men *most* miserable," *most* worthy to be commiserated. For, according to this supposition, they are the *only* persons who are utterly disappointed of their object; the only persons who, (by a fatal and irreparable mistake,) expecting an imaginary happiness in an imaginary world, lose their only opportunity of enjoying those present pleasures of which others avail themselves; dooming themselves to grasp at shadows, while they neglect the substance; harassed with a perpetual struggle against their natural propensities and passions; incurring, perhaps, the enmity or ridicule of their fellow-mortals; and—if the supposition be true that there is no such future state as that which they anticipate—all this is in vain!

But that supposition is *not*, for a moment, to be believed: these men are *not* thus deluded; they are *not* to be thus disappointed; it is impossible to conceive that they are. The perplexity, the inconsistency, the palpable absurdity, into which *those* are driven who argue upon the non-existence of immortality, the falsehood of revelation, proves, as far as proof can be expected, that *theirs* is a

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false hypothesis! Upon *their* hypothesis, man is the greatest enigma in the universe; that universe is itself a problem not to be solved: all is mystery, confusion, and despair! Bring in the light of revelation and immortality, the clouds and thick darkness in which the scene was enveloped disperse, and all is clear and harmonious. Man, with his astonishing endowments, is no longer "made in vain;" the universe, with its amazing phenomena, is no longer "made in vain!" We learn at once the cause and the cure of that vanity, in subjection to which "the whole creation groans," together with man. The origin of our misery and death, the recovery of life and immortality, are alike brought to light. Man has fallen by sin from the favour of his Maker; hence all the disorders and evils that surround him: but a salvation has been provided; "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation; God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, *not imputing to them their trespasses!*" *This*, my dear brethren, is the testimony of God in his own word; and, though men may dispute its authority, "let *God*," we say, "be true, but every man a liar."

To attain a share in this salvation, to recover the true end and perfection of our existence, in the resemblance and the favour of "the *only happy God*;" this is the great object of desire and pursuit to those whose eyes are opened to their real situation, whose hearts are awakened to a sense of their real want. And, "remembering how short

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their time is," they are the more in earnest that, by a glorious reverse of their naturally ruined state, they may prove at last to have *not* been "made in vain." They "pass the time of their sojourning in fear;" they are "sober, and watch unto prayer." "As obedient children, they fashion not themselves after the lusts of their ignorance, but, as He who hath called them is holy, so they seek to be holy in all their conversation." In a word, they count all things as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour: for they "*know* whom they have believed;" they have the *fullest assurance* in their faith. On other objects, which are so eagerly pursued by the men of this world, they have closed their eyes for ever: forgetting the things behind, reaching forward to those before, they *press* forward to the mark and prize of their high calling; and, though racks, ropes, swords, or fires, were to obstruct their way, they would *rush* through them all to reach their eternal goal! Jesus Christ is to them the very food of the soul, the very bread of life; and they make it the substance of their continual supplication, "Whatever beside is denied, *Lord, evermore give us this bread!*" Such are the views and affections which inspire true believers; such the object which, stretching into eternity, puts out, casts a darkness over, the brightest sublunary splendours; an object, apart from which it may be justly said, that "men," that "*all men, are made in vain!*"

The necessity and certainty of that salvation, that immortality, which the gospel reveals, is *one*

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and the *first* inference from what has been said: *another*, and the *last* inference I shall mention, is the extreme folly and misery of those who persist in the neglect of this salvation, this immortality. It is to throw away the end of existence, to sever ourselves from the possibility and the infinitude of happiness, and, in the awful language of scripture, to "*judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life!*" If a vast sum of money were committed to us, and we suddenly discovered that, by our own neglect, the whole was lost, we should be affected, probably, with serious alarm and regret: but what must be our emotion,—what our consternation, remorse, and despair,—should we discover, at the last judgement, that we have lived *in vain;* that, so far as our own interest is concerned, we have been made *in vain;* that we have received the grace of God *in vain;* that, having neglected the one salvation, we are *lost*, lost in the scale of being; immortal creatures, *lost* to the great purpose for which our Maker gave us existence; *lost* to happiness; irrecoverably and for ever *lost!* What must it be to discover that the mistake we have committed is at once *infinite* and *irreparable;* that we have been guilty of an infatuation, which it will require *eternity to deplore, and eternity to comprehend!* Now is the accepted time: let us earnestly avoid such an unutterable calamity; let us choose the favour of God as the only adequate end of our being; and embrace the salvation of Jesus Christ as the only way to attain that end; in a word, let us act as those who are swayed by the conviction that the

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christian is the only man of whom it can be said, in relation to eternal felicity, that he is *not* "made in vain."

IX.

DEATH, THE LAST ENEMY, SHALL BE DESTROYED.*

[PREACHED AT BEDFORD, MAY, 1817.]

1 COR. XV. 26.—*The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.*

IN this chapter the apostle directs the views of christians to the final consummation of all things; when the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, in our nature, having answered the ends for which it was established, shall be surrendered, "and God shall be all in all."

This kingdom is, in the mean time, progressive, and will be so till all enemies shall be subdued and placed under his feet. The apostle brings in the words of the text as an instance of this general proposition; but it may be proper here to remark somewhat of inaccuracy in our common version. That rendering does not seem to sustain the conclusion to which the apostle had arrived. It was his purpose to establish the perfection of our Saviour's conquest, the advancement of his

* From the Notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard.

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triumphs, and the prostration of all enemies whatever beneath his power. Now to say that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," by no means affords proof of this position. Though death might be destroyed, and be the last enemy that should be destroyed, it would not thence appear but that other enemies might remain, not destroyed. But the proper rendering is, "Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed."

Having made this observation, I would now direct your attention to the import of the proposition; and I will consider—

I. The nature of that enemy that shall be destroyed; and why he is called "the last enemy."

II. The manner and the successive stages in which our Lord Jesus has already conquered in part, and will completely conquer this last enemy.

I. The nature of that enemy that shall be destroyed, and why he is called "the *last* enemy."

It is not necessary to say much to shew that death is, in *many* respects, an enemy to the sons of Adam. It is so, first, if we consider it in its most obvious effects, the dissolution of the human frame. Every part of the body is part of a marvellous fabric, of a wonderful machine; which bears upon it the mark of divine wisdom and skill in its contrivance and execution. It is a work which man is not only unable to form or contrive, but the contrivance of which he is not able to comprehend. Every man possesses and carries in himself certain excellencies of composition, and enjoys the benefit of innumerable operations, while he is wholly

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unacquainted with the internal machinery by which they are produced. If we look upon the Goths and Vandals as the enemies of the nations, and of all civilized society, because they destroyed palaces and temples, and the ancient monuments of art; what must we think of death, which demolishes, not only in one victim, but in innumerable victims, the noblest fabric that was ever raised on earth; and spoils the most skilful works that were ever constructed? All human beauty, and vigour, and strength, are at once laid prostrate by the power of death; are broken and shivered to pieces under the stroke of this great tyrant. Were we to see, at once, all the victims which, in different lands and climes, and in all ages, have fallen before him, we should behold a pile of ruins raised to the heavens: but these ruins are mostly crumbled to dust, and concealed in the darkness of the grave; or what an amazing view would be afforded of the power and conquests of this universal enemy!

Again, Death is an enemy, as he puts an end to all that is terrestrial with regard to man. All the schemes, and projects, and thoughts, that relate only to the concerns of time, are destroyed. "In that day," says the word of God, "his thoughts perish:" all the thoughts of the sublimest genius of the most acute philosophers, of the subtlest statesmen, of the most ambitious projectors, perish! All find, at once, a termination to their intellectual labours, their sublunary joys and sorrows, hopes and fears: they go only as far as death leaves space for them; and stop where he

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opposes his power. As much, therefore, as the world is worth,—as much as it possesses of value in the eyes of man,—so much is death to be considered as a formidable foe, standing forth against him, and in opposition to his career.

Say, ye ambitious, ye lovers of wealth, ye pursuers of earthly pleasure, what will all the objects you desire avail you when you are summoned to meet this last enemy, and are by him confined to the narrow limits of the grave? What will you do in that period when your "souls shall be required of you," and you are questioned, "Whose shall these things be?" As much as you value these, so much will death be your enemy.

Death is also an enemy, because of the separation of the tenderest ties of nature and affection; of all those endearments of friendship and relationship that bind man to man. Death tears asunder brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, parents and children; he snatches the tender infant from the mother's breast, or bereaves it of parental care, and leaves it a helpless orphan in this wilderness. One part of the moral compound is left by him to mourn and sigh, while the other part is mingled with corruption, and becomes a companion of worms. Death so mars the features, that the most passionate admirers of the fairest and most lovely forms of beauty, are constrained to say, as Abraham said of Sarah, "Bury my dead out of my sight." All the fruits of friendship are withered by his breath; and one has been called alone, to go through the dark passage where no

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one could accompany him: while the survivor, who is left behind, frequently experiences the greatest sufferings, from the emotions and reflections of his mind. Alas! how many fond mothers, beloved children, and valuable friends, have been already sacrificed to this inexorable tyrant! Nor is there any union so closely formed, nor any friendship so established and strengthened, but it will be cut asunder and destroyed by the stroke of this great enemy, death.

But the most terrible part yet remains:—the moral, or rather the eternal consequences of death. If divine grace had not interposed, death has a sting by which he would pierce every transgressor, and send him to a state of interminable misery. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law."* The death of the body is by no means the full infliction of the penalty of the divine law. What we look upon as death, is only a dark passage which conducts the sinner to the state of eternal death. The dissolution of our body, and the separation of the spirit from it, is but a preparation; like knocking off the chains and fetters from a prisoner who is about to be led forth to the place of execution. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life."† Eternal life is here contrasted with death: but what is the opposite of eternal life, but eternal death—the death of the soul, which consists of the perpetual loss of hope; a cutting off from the presence and favour of God; a sense of his eternal

* 1 Cor. xv. 56. † Rom. vi. 23.

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wrath, which burns like devouring fire? The second death treads in the footsteps of the first, and its shadow covers it; it is the infliction of the sentence of the Eternal Governor of the universe; and the fear of it makes those who are aware they are sinners willing to struggle with a load of cares and sorrows, rather than fall into the hand of the living God: for it is a fearful thing,—"a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

There are many properties of this enemy which give him the preeminence of terror. He is an inexorable enemy. Others may be bribed by riches, soothed by flatteries, moved by the tears and sorrows of a suppliant, or reconciled by a mediator; a daysman may interpose; one may come between us and our enemy, who may interpose to ward off or suspend the blow: but none can "give a ransom for his brother," to redeem his soul from death;† "there is no discharge in that war:"‡ the redemption of the soul ceaseth "for ever;" there is no price that can be offered, or would be accepted. All the riches of the universe would be despised, if they were offered for only an hour's deliverance from the power of death: he wants the man himself, not what he possesses. Death will tear away the most ambitious from the heights of all his power, the wealthy from the midst of all his stores, and the voluptuous from the scene of all his pleasures. His ear is insensible to the groans of the child, and his eye is unmoved by the tears of the mother; he is not to be arrested or turned aside

* Heb. x. 31. † Psalm xlix. 7. ‡ Eccles. viii. 8.

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by the wailings of innocence, or by the outcries of guilt. All are levelled by the same undistinguishing stroke, and there is no possibility of release.

Death is an impartial enemy. Other enemies have particular grounds of quarrel; they do not oppose the whole of the species, but some individual, or a number of persons from whom they have received, or suppose they have received, an injury: but every one of the human race is the object of his enmity; his arrows will level all in the dust; "for it is appointed for *all* men once to die;"* and the grave is the "house of *all* the living." The strongest know that all their strength must fail: amidst all their dissipation, their hurry and care, their jollity and mirth, they know, that in the path along which they hasten on, there is one that will meet and destroy them; and they begin to look forward with anxiety and dismay in proportion as they approach the seat of this terrible majesty.

Like other great monarchs, he also has harbingers to proclaim and prepare for his approach. He sends before him the most agonizing pains and afflictions; diseases that consume our strength and vigour, and sometimes induce us to expect his arrival every moment. By the trembling joints, the dimness of the eyes, the changed countenance, the breaking of the "bowl at the cistern," and the loosing of the "silver cord," we know that he is near at hand. There is a shadow of death cast before him, extending according to the height of this terrible majesty, and stretching over part of

* Heb. ix. 27.

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the vale of life: yes, all that precedes our dissolution, all that is preparatory to the last stroke, are harbingers of death; afflictive in themselves, and to be dreaded on their own account, but peculiarly fearful as the precursors of this great adversary.

As these are his forerunners, so he has innumerable and dreadful instruments to destroy. The famine and the pestilence are in his hand; he kindles the fury of the battle, and riots in the field of slaughter; he wings the forked lightning, and expands the jaws of the devouring earthquake. The air we breathe, the elements by which we are supplied, and the food upon which we subsist, are often converted into the instruments of death: he levies a contribution upon all; and extracts the poison of mortality from that which is given for the sustenance of life.

Death is called, not only an enemy, but the "last enemy." This is introduced principally to denote the completeness of the Redeemer's conquest: nothing remains after the last.

This is the last enemy of the church of God in its collective capacity. Persecution shall cease, affliction be removed, fears and terrors of conscience quelled, temptations overcome, and Satan subdued: still the triumphs of death will remain; a large portion of what the Lord has redeemed will remain under his dominion; the bodies of believers will continue in the grave till the final consummation of all things. Though Jesus Christ extends his sceptre over all nations, and all

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kingdoms become the kingdoms of God and his Christ,—though millions of the faithful shall reign with him, and rejoice over every other enemy, and hope to rejoice over this,—yet the vestiges of his conquests shall remain legible in the graves of the saints, and on the tombs and monuments of the just.

Death is also the last enemy of every believer. The christian obtains a hope of pardon; he goes on conquering one temptation after another, "from strength to strength," from victory to victory; but he knows that, after all, his body must come under the power of this enemy, and remain for a season in his dark domain. 'I have,' says he, 'been carried through many trials; I have surmounted many difficulties; I have triumphed over many powerful temptations; but the dying part still remains: I have still a scene to pass through, in which I must be left alone; no friendly hand to guide or support me. I must engage, singly, with an enemy whom all men dread, and whose power no *man* comprehends, for it is invisible. He smites with an unseen hand: and, though millions have passed through the conflict, not one has returned to tell the secrets of his power and to unveil his territory; which, after so many ages, remains, as to us, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself."' Though the christian does not sink into despair as he meets the last enemy and the hour of contest approaches, yet he frequently trembles; for he knows not what may occur before that triumph is afforded which puts the seal of perpetuity to all the other triumphs of his soul.

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To other men, what ought I to say of the last enemy? However long they have escaped his power, he will meet them at last; when they are giddy with intoxicating pleasures; or walking on the heights of boundless ambition; or are the slaves of an avarice, rapacious as the grave: when they imagine they have nothing to fear, when "they have more than heart can wish, and their eyes stand out with fatness," they find an enemy coming upon them like an armed man; they find in death all that is terrible; they are forced to encounter the *last* enemy—an enemy that must be conquered, or they must be defeated and lost for ever and ever.

II. We are to consider the manner, and the successive stages, in which our Lord Jesus has already conquered in part, and will completely conquer, this last enemy. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."* Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed.

Consider the degrees and stages by which Jesus Christ conquers death.

1. By his incarnation and passion he purchased a right, in behalf of the human race, to conquer death and to triumph over it. Power and right are two distinct things; and, among men, the former is frequently opposed to the latter. A man may have power to do what he has no right to do. Jesus Christ, as God, had power to put down death; but it was necessary, in order that it might be put down fitly and properly, that such an

* 1 Cor. xv. 25.

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expiation should be made as would remove the guilt on account of which mankind were doomed to die. "It became him,"—there was a fitness, a congruity in it,—"it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* Not perfect with respect to his moral character, but perfectly fitted for his work; sustaining, by his suffering, the penalty his people had incurred, and thus acquiring an indisputable right to conduct them through every scene of life and death to his kingdom and glory. Remember, the moral consequence of sin is death. It was impossible that this enemy should be put down unless some way could be found to expiate our offences, that the transgressors might be freed from the penalty which, being transferred, was sustained by a surety. It was Jesus Christ who, in consequence of uniting in his person the nature of God and man, interposed between man and God "to make an end of sins, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."† This he accomplished by his incarnation and suffering. His incarnation rendered him capable of suffering, and his divinity stamped an infinite value upon the sufferings of his humanity. Thus, the weakness of his flesh united with the dignity of his godhead to procure the ransom of mankind from their subjection to death. His Father "laid help upon him as one that is mighty," "he exalted one chosen out of the people:"‡ "this

* Heb. ii. 10. † Dan. ix. 24. ‡ Psalm lxxxix. 19.

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is his servant whom he upholds, his elect in whom his soul delighteth."*

This enemy, according to the established and eternal rules of the divine government, could not be encountered and overcome but by one who was willing to yield, for a season, to his power. He that would conquer death for us, must invade his territories, pass the threshold of his cavern, become an inhabitant or a sojourner in his domains: and to this Jesus submitted. By death "he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."† Thus, by weakness, he became "mighty to save." His sufferings and death upon the cross laid those deep foundations on which the fabric of immortality is firmly built.

2. Jesus Christ, by his Spirit, gives the earnest and the pledge of victory over the last enemy: he takes away the power of sin, which is the sting of death, and he communicates the principle of life. Whoever is enabled, through the Spirit, to lay hold of Jesus Christ by faith, lays hold of him who is the "resurrection and the life." "Whosoever believeth in me shall never die."‡ Thus our Saviour taught, to the confusion of the Jews: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and

* Isaiah xlii. 1. † Heb. ii. 14, 15. ‡ John xi. 25, 26.

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drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."* Thus they shall never taste of death; that bitter taste, which lies in the dread of its consequences, they shall not experience as those do who know not Christ, and have not his Spirit. They who flee into the arms of the Saviour, who appropriate the fruits of his death, become, thereby, living members of their living head; they have the "earnest of the purchased inheritance;" they enjoy peace with God, a holy superiority over their "last enemy;" and, as they advance to the contest, can triumphantly exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"† They know him to be a destroyer only of that which must be destroyed; and that even the body, though it moulder to dust, shall rise again. Their souls are also inlaid with blessed principles, so as to be prepared for a glorious immortality. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that

* John vi. 54—58. † 1 Cor. xv. 55.

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dwelleth in you;"* and by these influences they shall become meet subjects of eternal purity and happiness.

Thus Jesus Christ goes on reigning till every portion of the power of death is abolished. The penalty of death is conditionally abolished in favour of the whole, so that it is proclaimed throughout the world, that "whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall never perish, but have everlasting life."† And there is an earnest of immortality in the believer: as Jesus Christ, our substitute, took possession of immortality, and "became the first-fruits of them that slept,"‡ so all his saints have in themselves an inward pledge, like that which Christ had on earth, an earnest of their alliance to eternal life.

3. When these preparatory measures have taken place, the empire of death shall be sapped to the foundation, and its power be utterly destroyed. This has been a widely extended empire, founded on, or spreading over, the ruins of all other empires: it has comprehended within its domains all the seed of Adam; it has continued from age to age. Compared with the length of its existence, the boasted eternal duration of the Roman city and empire is as nothing. But the final stroke will produce the entire overthrow of this wide and lasting dominion. The chapter from which the text is taken treats of this. He who first, by his death, gave us a right to this victory, He who, by

* Rom. viii. 9—11. † John iii. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

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giving the earnest of the Spirit, raised us to a holy superiority over our enemy, will at last vanquish him by that almighty energy by which he is "able even to subdue all things unto himself."* He will then "fashion these vile bodies like unto his own glorious body;" he will stand forth as the pattern by which believers shall be formed. They that are earthy, continue, like the first man, earthy; but believers, who once bore the image of the earthy, now bear the image of the heavenly. "The first man is of the earth," but "the second man is the Lord from heaven."† He has the capacity of everlasting existence; a well-spring of life from which life will be supplied to all his brethren. In the epistle to the Thessalonians, which is the first that was written by this apostle, he says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."‡ He does not mean to teach us here that they shall rise before the wicked, however true that may be; but that they shall rise before those

* Phil. iii. 21. † 1 Cor. xv. 47. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 13—16.

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who are alive shall be changed: "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* The first effect of divine power will be to raise the dead in a moment, to call forth those that sleep in the dust, to make "the sea give up the dead that are in it;" to loosen the tombs and open the sepulchres that have been closed for ages over the dust of the saints: *then* "they which are alive shall be changed." He recurs to the same subject in this chapter: "Behold," says he, "I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."† The last trump, which shall give notice of the change of those that are alive, is here distinguished from the former trumpet, at the sounding of which the dead shall be raised. Thus the Saviour, by one voice, uttered with greater majesty than when he said, "Lazarus, come forth," will raise the dead; and by a second he will change the living; so that all will be prepared to be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air."

Thus the empire of death, which has suffered a slow decay, which it has required so many ages to overthrow, which has seemed to recover from its defeats, will at last sink by one powerful stroke, never to rise again. It will not require more than a moment of time to raise all the dead, to lay open

* 1 Thess. iv. 17. † 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

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every sepulchre, to restore every particle of dust, that is fit to be restored, to its proper body, and for all the bodies of the saints to be prepared for the mansion of eternal glory.

How insipid and tame are the histories of all other conquests,—of the rise and fall of all other kingdoms and empires,—when compared with the grand and wonderful achievements of the "King Immortal," and the fall of death beneath his power, and the giving up of all his prey;—when every victim from earth and sea, though under monuments of marble, nay, rocks of adamant, shall be restored;—when he shall bring forth every particular form to be repossessed by its proper spirit, from which it has been for a season divorced! Thus will he "swallow up death in victory," and then clothe his redeemed with garments of immortality. Death shall be known and feared no more. Millions of millions shall join in everlasting praises to him whom all the redeemed will acknowledge as their great Deliverer.

My dear brethren, what is the proper improvement of this subject? To raise our eyes in adoration and gratitude to the blessed Saviour, who will fulfil the threatening, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."* "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We shall be more than conquerors, through him that loved us."† Lift up your eyes, ye saints, in love and praise to the glorious Redeemer. He hath reconciled you by

* Hosea xiii. 14. † Rom. viii. 37.

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his blood; defeated your spiritual enemies, and raised in you hopes of immortality. What remains for you is infinitely greater than what you possess. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."* What is the proper frame of spirit for you to possess? To have your conversation in heaven, to be "looking for, and hasting to, the coming of the Son of God."

How great, my brethren, are the privileges you enjoy! Have you any need to scramble for the perishing riches of this world? Will you "load yourselves with thick clay?" Will you fret and repine if you are disappointed in your expectation of worldly good, or if you are deprived of what you once enjoyed? Will you forget "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation?" The pledge is granted to you now. Your Elder Brother, at the right hand of the throne, has taken possession for you. Will you corrupt yourselves with "lusts of the flesh, and of the eye, and with the pride of life," while you have heaven open to your view, and the promise of eternal life laid before you? It doth not indeed "appear" at present "what you shall be;" there is not room enough on earth for the display of such glory: the glory of the eternal world must come down, before we

* 1 John iii. 2.

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can fully know what "God hath prepared for them that love him." Your glory would be too great to be sustained by flesh and blood; these cannot enter into the kingdom but at the redemption of the body. Then shall be the "manifestation of the sons of God:" the meanest christian will appear as a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost; every saint will arise and shine as the sun in the kingdom of his heavenly Father. At his powerful voice, that penetrates the grave and agitates the dust, all shall shine forth with a lustre which will extinguish all sublunary glory.

How, also, ought these considerations to elevate believers above the sorrows and afflictions of time! The apostle, when speaking of the same solemn event, in the passage from the Thessalonians which I have already quoted, adds, "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." This indeed is substantial comfort; this is the balm of every wound; this supports us under the stroke that bereaves us of our dearest friends and relatives. Those who have followed the remains of christians to the grave, have, amidst their sorrows, nourished heavenly hope, and enjoyed consolation sufficient to make them almost the objects of envy.

And this enemy is the "last enemy:" when *he* is destroyed, the field will be quite clear; the vast field of eternity will be free from every molestation. The mind may travel on as far as imagination can extend, and nothing will arise to discourage. This is the "last enemy:" nothing more to be feared; all sin shall be absolved, the powers of darkness

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banished, evil inclinations eradicated, and the world destroyed. When death is vanquished, all his precursors, appendages, and consequences, shall fall with him; nothing remains but salvation, glory, and eternal life,—an everlasting monument to the honour of the mighty Conqueror of death. Well may he be styled the "King of kings," and the "Lord of lords:" worthy was he to receive a name, a "new name," exalted "above every other name," "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess"* him to be Lord of all! Never was there another being, much less a being in our nature, who ever thought of gaining such a victory, ever thought of lifting up a weapon, or aiming a stroke, in such a conflict. But Jesus has "led captivity captive;"† he has swallowed up death in victory.

I speak to dying men, and cannot conclude without addressing a word to those who have no acquaintance with Christ, no vital union with him, no comfort in his promises. You may have surmounted many difficulties, been conducted through scenes of trial, gained some advantage over certain enemies, obtained great prosperity in the world, and be ready to say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" but recollect, there is another enemy yet to contend with; a dreadful battle remains to be fought, and by no power of your own can you overcome. There is an adversary at the *end* of your path: he adds to the tyranny all the caprice which is

* Phil. ii. 9—11. † Eph. iv. 8.

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common to arbitrary powers; he delights to strike into the dust those who are most exalted; he loves to shoot his arrows at a shining mark, and suddenly to fall upon those who are least apprehensive.

Whether you are aware of this enemy or not, whether you foresee his approach or not, he will meet you, and engage you in a greater conflict than you have ever yet sustained. You must conquer, or be defeated and lost for ever. But you have no power to overcome, to appease, to deceive, to turn away, or to escape from this strong adversary. There is, however, a proclamation proceeding from the Saviour, in the gospel: "I am the resurrection, and the life: whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."* "The hour is coming, when they that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth."† "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."‡ "Wherefore, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord:" their spirits repose in his bosom; even their dust is precious in his sight, and he watches over it till he shall fashion it anew; and, in body and spirit, they shall be heirs of immortality and partakers of his glory for ever and ever.

What then remains for my dying hearers? Some of you will, perhaps, never hear another sermon; all are liable soon and suddenly to fall; none of you can escape, none can find comfort but in the Saviour and in his gospel. What then remains? What is your wisdom? What does sound

* John xi. 25, 26. † John v. 28, 29. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

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common sense dictate, but that you should make an immediate application to the Saviour, and place an entire confidence in him; that you should pray for his Spirit, and seek its constant guidance? Let me entreat you that are young to consider that your covenant with death will soon be at an end. Youth is often the victim of this enemy; and he, whom they think will come late, because he is the last enemy on earth, frequently levels those to the dust who bid fair to flourish for years to come.

Some of you have advanced far in the path of life; grey hairs are here and there upon you: others observe your approach to the cave of the last enemy;—the feebleness of your voice, the wrinkles on your forehead, the decay of your vigour, forebode your last conflict, while you are buried amidst the cares of life, and think nothing of death. "This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation," that men so near to eternity will not look to the Saviour, nor direct a single thought to heaven, nor offer up one prayer to secure the immortal crown.

Prepare for death! You cannot be prepared but by repentance and faith. "This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent:"* not to hear of Christ, or speak of him, or profess him; but to *know* him: to have fellowship with him; to have an interest in him; to receive him as your friend, while you submit to his sceptre. If you have not yet

* John xvii. 3.

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submitted to the Saviour, when you come to the end of life, what can you carry with you? What can you retain, but an immortal nature, a conscience of right and wrong, and therefore of your own deserts?—an awful responsibility!

"After death is the judgement." What is to shield you in judgement from the stroke of vengeance? Have you been hearing the calls of the gospel, without regarding them? Have you not applied the truth to yourselves? O, retreat now from the snares of the world; shut your eyes upon the scenes of time, on which they must soon be closed for ever. Converse with the world to come; endeavour to yield to the power of it; look at "the things which are not seen;" walk, as it were, upon the borders of the ocean of eternity, and listen to the sound of its waters till you are deaf to every sound besides.

The blessed Saviour, who, when he was upon earth, raised the dead and healed all manner of diseases, is able to heal your spiritual maladies, and to raise you from the dead. He is exalted for this purpose: the "river of life" flows from his side; he invites you to partake of it; "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."* In the blessed Saviour are all the springs of pardon, grace, and everlasting consolation: he will guide you through every scene, give you victory over death, admit you through the gates into the city,

* Rev. xxii. 17.

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and there he will "wipe away all tears from your eyes;"* he will dwell with you, and you with him; and you shall be "kings and priests unto God" for ever.

When you meet with the next suggestion to infidelity, the next temptation to sin, ask whether those who tempt you can confute the declarations of Jesus; whether they can give such evidence of the falsehood, as he gives of the truth, of his sayings; whether they can offer any thing that is worthy of being put in competition with the blessings he promises; whether all the world affords,—even if it could be prolonged to eternity, which cannot be,—would be equal to the blessings of eternal and heavenly glory? If not, turn from them; spurn them away; "lay hold on eternal life," and say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

X.

THE SUCCESS OF MISSIONS DEPENDS UPON THE AGENCY OF THE SPIRIT.†

[PREACHED AT THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE, OCTOBER 6, 1819.]

Isa. xxxii. 13—15.—*Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous*

* Rev. xxi. 4.

† Printed from the notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq., collated and blended with those of the Rev. S. Hillyard.

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city: because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

THIS chapter contains a very evident prophecy of the appearance and the kingdom of Christ, as you perceive by referring to the first part of it. Contrary to what might be expected, the prophet turns aside; and, instead of finishing the painting of that beautiful scene of things which might be anticipated as the effect of this appearance, he proceeds to paint a scene of great desolation, of great barrenness, in the words which have now been read to you. Agreeably to this, the actual effect of our Saviour's manifestation, with respect to the people to whom he more immediately came, was by no means such as might be expected. After gathering a few out of that nation, and thus planting the first christian church, God retired from them on account of their impenitence and unbelief; and the land is still abandoned to that desolation and barrenness which is here represented.

Under these figures we are probably principally called to notice the spiritual barrenness, the spiritual blindness, hardness, and impenitence of heart, which have befallen that unhappy people, and under which they at present labour. It is said, in the words now read, that this unhappy state will continue to a certain point of time, or rather till the arrival of a certain important event;—that event is predicted in the last verse.

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If it were asked the prophet, How long shall this state of desolation last? he answers, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Thus the prophet teaches us, that the desolations will not come to an end, until, in consequence of great changes, and the improvement of the moral condition of men, there shall arise a state of prosperity by which the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and that which is now so esteemed, shall be counted in comparison a forest.

Though the immediate bearing of these words is, in all probability, upon the state and prospects of the Jewish people; yet, by parity of reasoning, it may be extended much farther, and may be considered as assigning the reason why the nations of the earth continue in so wretched a state, with respect to things spiritual and divine, as that which they now exhibit: and they may be considered as directing our expectations, and regulating our confidence, respecting the final termination of this state of things; teaching that it will come to an end,—that a great and beneficial change will take place, but not till the Spirit be poured out from on high. Then, and not till then, will "the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

Considered in this light, these words bear a very close relation to the subject of our present meeting, and tend to regulate our views and expectations respecting the success of that great work, with

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a view to the promotion of which we are at this time assembled in the presence of the Almighty; and may allay that dissatisfaction and discontent, so far as it borders on repining, which the comparatively small success attending the proclamation of the gospel in the present times might excite; while it serves to strengthen our faith in the promise of that Being, who, as he has afforded this hope, is abundantly able to accomplish it by that mighty power by which he will "subdue all things unto himself."

The great and momentous truth taught in this passage, you perceive, my brethren, is, that the ultimate success of missions,—of the proclamation of the gospel, in short, in every form,—depends upon the communication of the Spirit; and that its perfect success can be effected only in consequence of that Spirit being "poured down from on high." It is this momentous truth, and the proper improvement of it, to which, on the present occasion, I shall request your serious attention.

That the Spirit of God is afforded at present to the church is evident from its existence; for, since the church is entirely a spiritual structure, raised and preserved by that divine Spirit, if it had been utterly withdrawn, it would have been annihilated. Every member of that church is the production of the Spirit, quickened by the Spirit, and moulded to accord with the foundation-stone upon which, by faith, it is built. We cannot, therefore, for a moment contemplate the total withdrawment of the Spirit of God, either as an

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event that has taken place since the first proclamation of christianity, or as one that is to be apprehended. We witness many pleasing instances, in our congregations and churches, of divine communications to the mind, — of hearts opened to "receive the truth in the love of it," and brought into willing captivity to Christ; instances as clearly verified as those we read of in the New Testament. But still, though the Spirit of God is not utterly withdrawn, that time has not arrived which is here announced; the Spirit is not "poured from on high" in that plenitude and variety of gifts which may be reasonably expected. A few drops of this sacred influence descend here and there; but it by no means descends in so copious a shower, nor so widely diffuses that spiritual fertility which the Scriptures give us reason to anticipate: it is not "poured from on high."

That the success, the ultimate and full success of missions, depends upon the outpouring of the Spirit of God, appears to be manifest from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. This involves a doctrine so familiar to your apprehensions who are acquainted with "the truth as it is in Jesus," that it would be needless to accumulate all the proofs the Scripture would supply; a few passages only are necessary. Our text is one of this kind. In the prophecies of Isaiah you find frequent passages of Scripture which represent, that the work of diffusing christianity is to be throughout truly the work of God; is to be distinguished as such by every serious spectator.

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Thus we are told that he will plant "in the wilderness the cedar tree, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; that he will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it;" plainly implying that the bringing in of the heathen nations, as well as the conversion of the Jews, is so much the work of God, that it will be made conspicuous to all true believers.

When the conversion of the Jews, which must be supposed to be effected by the same sort of agency, is announced by the prophet Zechariah, it is in these words: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." The

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prophet Zechariah, in order to encourage Zerubbabel in the building of the temple,—where an eminent type is presented of the Messiah, the great Restorer of the temple of God, who is announced under the appellation of the True Branch,—says, it is "not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The passage in Joel, when cited by St. Peter* on the day of Pentecost, he refers to the events of that day: and though this may seem to break in upon our doctrine, yet, when truly considered, it confirms it; for we are not to consider this as fulfilled merely at one period, but at different stages; as verified at different eras, and as pointing out a steady series of operations of the Divine Being, effected by the same sort of agency, and for the same purpose, at different periods of the gospel dispensation, all comprehended under the general term, "*the last days.*" If mere human agency would avail, no reason can be assigned why it should not have been sufficient, at that time, for the conversion of the Jews; as well as for the conversion of the Gentiles at present. But we know that the conversion of the Jews was the effect of the miraculous effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and we have reason to suppose there will be a like effusion before the consummation of all things; one which will realise more fully the prediction of the prophet Joel: for he does not change one man by one means, and another by one that is totally different; and one

* Acts ii. 17.

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nation by one kind of agency, and another by another; but the mode in which he proceeds, and the nature of the materials employed, are, with regard to Him, just as uniform as the nature of the work to be accomplished. Wherever the diffusion of the gospel is presented to us in the Old Testament, in a course of prophetic annunciation, the hand of God is always the object to which it is referred: it is perpetually claimed as his work; and the most magnificent expressions are used to represent this work in distinction from any other. The prophet Jeremiah declares that a new covenant shall be made, distinct from that made with their forefathers, by which God will undertake to put his "law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; that he will be their God, and that they shall be his people." Who can possibly suppose this can intend any thing else but the real agency of the Spirit of God? For by what words can that be more aptly represented than by the Divine Spirit, who wrote with his own finger, on the stony tables, the words of the law, and who will inscribe his precepts on "the fleshly tables of the heart?" When the Divine Being informs the Jews, that, after a long series of desolations and judgements, he shall bring to a close their captivities, painting it in very delightful colours, he says, "And I will no more hide my face from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God."*

In the New Testament, we learn that the great

* Ezek. xxxix. 29.

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Captain of our salvation did not encounter the powers of darkness, or enter upon his work, till he was anointed by the Spirit of God: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and renewing of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bound, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He, though a personage of such a divine and extraordinary character, yet, considered as an instrument in this work, (with reverence be it spoken,) was not qualified for it till the Spirit had descended upon him; and when he went into the wilderness he was filled with the Spirit. His apostles also were made fit for their work by the effusion of the Spirit from on high, on the day of Pentecost: till that time they were not qualified for their work in the nations to which they were to be sent. And though I am aware it may be said, this respects the conferring miraculous gifts, yet, be it recollected, that we find as great a change in the moral state of the disciples: from being ignorant, secular, and pusillanimous, they were brought into a most blessed frame of mind; they were truly enlightened, and transformed at once into heroes of zeal and piety. There appeared as great a change in their affections and hearts: they were as much purified and refined from their former selves, as they were distinguished by the possession of miraculous gifts.

Wherever the apostles had any distinguished

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success in the ministry of the gospel, they certainly remind us of its being effected by a divine agency. If they preached with success at Antioch, where it appears that their ministry was attended with great benefit, it is announced in these words: "And the hand of the Lord was with them." When Paul had preached the gospel to the heathen, after having been committed with Barnabas to the work of the Lord to which they were sent, they represented to the church "how God had opened a way to the Gentiles:" and the Jewish christians were compelled, we are told, to magnify the grace of God in communicating this blessing to them; and they did it in these words: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." If Lydia was converted to the faith of Christ, we are told it was because "the Lord had opened her heart to attend to the things that were spoken." How clear and decided, again, is the language of Paul, when speaking on this subject!—"Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase: so then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Sincere preachers of the gospel, then, as far as they have been successful in the work, even from the very beginning, from the first communication of divine truth, have uniformly represented it as the work of God, as the work of his Spirit, independent of the instrumentality which he employed in the ministry of

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the word: those instruments themselves considered it as the work of God to confer success on their labours by the power of his Spirit. It is evident, from the nature of the thing, that it must be so; for, considering the state of man, it is impossible to suppose that any thing less than a divine power can change the heart. If the state of man be a state of trespasses and sins,—if "the carnal mind be enmity against God,"—how is it possible that from such elements as these can spring pure and ardent love to the Divine Being, but in consequence of a divine power? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Were it the design of God merely to build on a foundation already laid, or to repair a dilapidated edifice, one might talk of the efficacy of human suasion; but when that which is to be done is to create a new principle, to pour new life into the soul, to give "a new heart," to plant new seeds in a soil where all has been barrenness and desolation, to turn the waters into new channels, to effect a total change of heart and character,—what can accomplish all this but an almighty power? Hence the Scriptures represent it as a creation of new organs; giving eyes to see and ears to hear, that we may see, and hear, and understand, and feel, as we never did before. It is represented as quickening the dead, and this "according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ Jesus, when he raised him from the dead." Thus "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Faith is the great principle of this change,

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and *it* is "the gift of God," and is of grace; for, "by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "To you," says the same apostle, "it is *given*, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." What is more manifest than that this language implies that believing is always the effect of divine grace? We allow, indeed, most cheerfully and thankfully, that the gospel is the instrument of God, and wonderfully fitted by him for his work: but even *it* is nothing more than an instrument; and when it is successful and baffles every human effort exerted against it, it is because it is wielded by an omnipotent arm. The gospel of God, when directed by the wisdom of God and urged by his energy, none can withstand.

Human suasion can operate only on principles which already exist. When Demosthenes, by his powerful eloquence, excited the Athenians to combat, he only called into action, by a skilful grouping of motives, and an appropriate exercise of his genius, principles already existing, but which had lain dormant: He created nothing new; he transformed them not into new creatures; but only roused and stimulated those principles which had animated the bosoms of nations in resisting tyranny in every age. But when the apostles went forth to preach faith in Christ, they enforced and demanded, if I may so say, a state of things of which there had been no instance:—they proposed to make a change in the mind and heart of man to which there was no natural tendency; they required a creature "dead

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in trespasses and sins" to awake to Christ; they proposed to convert him into a devoted servant, a subject most loyal, most affectionate, and ardent: and how was it possible that any mere human art or force could effect such changes as these?

It is worthy of observation, that those who have had the greatest success in preaching the gospel in heathen nations, as well as in christian lands, have ever been the most deeply convinced of this important truth; a truth they enforced in every stage of the progress of the gospel, and which, instead of producing discouragement, only awakened greater ardour: their strength appeared only to lie in an implicit confidence in Him whose energy is all-sufficient, and who has so fully declared his willingness to exert it. Thus, Brainerd, and Schwartz, and Elliott, and those in every age who have had the greatest success in turning men to righteousness, have been the first to declare that they were nothing. They, of all men, most ardently implored, and most entirely depended upon, the agency we are now contemplating; and their success appears to have been more in proportion to their earnest solicitude in seeking this blessing, this divine agency, than to any other cause whatsoever. Now, if we see men accomplish a great and extraordinary work, and those who are most successful in it ascribing their success to a particular cause, would it not be presumption in us, who know nothing of the matter, to doubt their testimony? If success were to be considered as a test as to the manner in which the effect has

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been produced, in what other instances are persons who are mere spectators, who have taken no care to collect information on the subject, held to be better judges than those who have "borne the burden and heat of the day," and have had, in proportion to their success, the deepest consciousness that they were nothing,—that they merely "planted and watered, but that it was God who gave the increase?"

Those who do not believe there is any agency of the Spirit of God, are so conscious that nothing else can produce the desired effect, that they do not venture into the field; but, while they despair of the conversion of men, deal out scorn upon such as are engaged in the work. They are chiefly those who either dispute against, or practically trifle with, the agency of the Spirit;—who are conscious they have no adequate power; and yet, while they feel this, pity, or affect to pity, the persons who depend on resources with which they are unacquainted, and whose value, therefore, they are unable to estimate. This is a plain matter of fact.

There is a class of professed christians in this country, (I would not use any invidious terms,) who formally deny the great doctrine of the influence of the Spirit; and, with regard to that denomination generally, containing many men of great talents and high respectability, what has been their conduct—what the sentiments they have evinced? A complete hopelessness of the least success, and a corresponding inactivity in calling on the idolater

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to abandon his idols, and wait for the Son of God from heaven. Look at those classes of christians who are disposed to feel the greatest distrust of the conversion of the heathen. Is not that distrust founded on a real disbelief of the agency of the Spirit? Hence they satisfy themselves with cavilling at the supposed insufficiency of the instruments employed, on the supposition that those persons are the agents; while they themselves feel that they are no more than the pencil by which the Lord engraved the precepts on "the tables of stone," and that they are that by which the Spirit of God writes it "upon the fleshly tables of the heart." Look, on the other hand, at the history of those who have been the most successful missionaries to the heathen, and see whether you cannot trace certain results for which you cannot account on any other hypothesis than that most momentous one of a divine influence, at certain periods, accompanying their labours. In the history of Brainerd, and Elliott, and others, you perceive that, for a considerable time, there seem to have been the same efforts employed, the same doctrines taught, the same earnest and zealous prayers, and the same watchfulness over their own hearts, and yet no saving effect produced on others: all still remained barren; no desirable movement of the heart was excited; and this continued for a long period. Such was the state of things when Brainerd first undertook the mission to the Indians; but, after a considerable time, while he was propounding only the same doctrines, and using only the same

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means, the Spirit of God appeared to put forth its energy, and divine communication was imparted; at one season "like a rushing, mighty wind," at others, "like the dew and the rain from heaven," softening, and thus opening the heart which had resisted the entrance of sacred truth, and causing the tear of genuine penitence to steal down the cheek. Nobody could doubt that there was some one greater than a missionary there;—that the Spirit of God had changed the barren soil to sacred ground, and had wetted it, like "Gideon's fleece, with the dews from heaven." And so it is, my brethren, that every person who has had any long acquaintance with the christian ministry, is aware that there are certain periods of barrenness, and certain periods for bearing fruit. The same talents, whether great or small, may be brought into action; but there shall be some seasons in which no good shall be done, and others in which similar efforts shall be crowned with extraordinary success.

There are two reasons why we are in danger, even if we believe this doctrine, of losing sight of its true bearing and importance.

In the first place, one reason why it is difficult to depend, as we ought, on the agency of the Spirit, and yet continue active, is, that it is not matter of consultation, and that it cannot immediately and directly enter into the regulation of the choice of expedients, or the adoption of measures. It is altogether an affair, a secret, of the Divine Being: it cannot in any degree be

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subjected to our control, and, therefore, it cannot be the subject of our counsel. We are called upon to exert ourselves as much in the same way, to employ the same sort of instrumentality, to set on foot the same means, as though there were no such doctrine existing in our creed, and no such expectation existing in our minds. The consequence is, we are very apt to lose sight, even while strenuously attending to our duty, in some measure, of that mysterious and divine agency on which the success of all our efforts must depend. The most busy husbandman is not always the one who sees most clearly his dependence on the sun or the rain: and while good men may be exerting their utmost prudence, and their utmost zeal, for the diffusion of christianity among the heathen, they are in great danger of losing sight of their dependence on the invisible agency of the Divine Spirit, in directing their attention exclusively to the apparatus they are setting in motion.

Another reason probably is, that this is an invisible power; whereas our own actions and plans are objects of distinct observation. The energy of the Divine Spirit is to be seen only in its effects. It is a mysterious, hidden agency; whereas the plans we form furnish objects of sensation and observation: and such is the miserable littleness of the human mind, after all, that we are more struck with "sparks of our own kindling," than with the light of heaven;—more occupied in looking at the instrumentality, than in impressing upon our minds the mysterious and potent energy

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of the Almighty. It is one thing to *believe* that there is an agency of the Spirit, and gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, to render christianity beneficial to men; and quite another thing to have *a deep and practical persuasion* of it, and to regulate all our feelings and expectations on the momentous subject of converting the world, by a continual reference to this most interesting truth.

Here, then, permit me, for a few moments, to point out what appears to be the proper practical improvement of the truth, that the success of missions depends on the agency of the Divine Spirit. If this be a fact, my brethren, it necessarily teaches us our entire dependence on God, and, consequently, it ought to engage us to attempt the work of evangelizing the heathen, with the greatest humility, and the most profound annihilation of self; with a perfect renunciation of our own strength and of our own resources. These are absolute prerequisites to a true dependence on God. While we use our own resources, we must, in a measure, distrust them, and pray to God that we may use them aright. We can do nothing towards putting in motion the only agency from which any permanent result of the right kind can flow. I say, nothing, absolutely nothing: and yet we must exert our instrumentality; for mere instruments are nothing apart from the divine agency included in the promise. Separate from the hand which wields us,—from the volition of the Divine Being,—and from the agency of that Spirit which is included in this promise,—we are, I repeat it, absolutely nothing. Any false

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confidence, therefore, such as suggests itself probably to men who have been teachers of other sciences, —any of that elation of mind, or confidence in our own strength, which has given, perhaps, nerve and elevation to human courage,—is out of place here. The apostle was the greatest of all men in this matter: but how was he affected? He tells the Corinthians, that he was with them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling;" his work was watered with tears and with prayers; he felt himself a worm in the presence of the great Agent: and hence it was that he was enabled to "thresh mountains." There was always in his mind a deep sentiment of humility, and a powerful conviction of the presence of the Divine Being.

The rain is not more necessary to raise the seed, the sun is not more necessary to bring it to maturity, than this work of the Spirit. Hence, I would observe, prayer appears to be of the utmost importance in connexion with every attempt for the conversion of the heathen nations. Prayer appears, indeed, to be the appropriate duty of such as desire their conversion: prayer in the closet; prayer on those seasons on which they are consulting as to their plans of operation. It was while the church at Antioch were waiting on the Lord, and fasting, that the Holy Ghost said, "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." It was by prayer they were commended to the work for which they were designed. If the Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, it was when they were "all with one accord in one

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place." It appears that, in every period of the world, prayer, a spirit of prayer for this great object, has been the precursor of real success. More than sixty years ago, as several of you are, I doubt not, aware, a union among real christians for extraordinary prayer began to manifest itself. It first appeared in America, and was most warmly recommended by President Edwards: thence it was transferred to Scotland, by the instrumentality of the venerable Dr. Erskine; and from thence into England, by our valuable friend, Dr. Ryland, at the commencement of the baptist mission; and the excellent practice was soon adopted by pious men of other persuasions. Never is a mission more likely to prosper, than when it is begun in the spirit of ardent prayer and supplication. And if ever this spirit departs from us, "the glory is departed" from this mission: if ever we cease to mingle the spirit of devotion with these services, we may succeed in outward means, we may multiply and extend them, but we shall never see the conversion of the heathen. Prayer touches the only spring that can possibly ensure success. By speaking we move man; but by prayer we move God. It is through the medium of prayer that the littleness and meanness of man prevail with Omnipotence. "The prayer of faith" is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields: he looks upon every other power as more or less opposed to him; but he looks upon this as a confession of man's dependence, as an appropriate homage to his greatness, as an attraction

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which brings down his divine agency to the earth.

Here every one may assist missions: and every tear in the closet, every pang in the heart over the miseries of those who are dead in their sins, every prayer lifted up in that retirement where no eye sees but the eye of Him "which seeth in secret," affords a most important benefit. These are the elements of success; these the pledges of final triumph. You know it has been customary for a considerable time, for a special season of prayer to be set apart in our society, and among christians of other denominations, for the conversion of the heathen. On the fervour of these supplications, through the intercession of the great Mediator, will, I have no doubt, depend the final realisation of our hopes in the conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ.

It necessarily results from the doctrine of the text, that we ought to be exceedingly careful not to "grieve the Spirit of God." He is the great Agent; and we must expect to succeed in proportion only as we shall gratify that Holy Spirit. You know the tempers which grieve that Spirit; you know that "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil speaking, and bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour," are directly opposed to His nature,—that they are an element in which He never moves; but that meekness, and gentleness, and forgiveness of injuries, and love, and joy, and peace, and long-suffering, and goodness, and faith, and temperance,—that the lamb-

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like virtues of Jesus Christ, are those in which He delights. You know the graces of the Spirit of God, which he imparted to Jesus Christ, are still the object of his predilection, and that he cannot dwell amongst us any farther than he nourishes those dispositions in us; that He who first gave the Spirit, still gives the same Spirit and no other Spirit; and we can expect no triumphant success of his gospel, or his kingdom, but in proportion as we are "anointed by the Spirit:" for, as "the oil ran down to the skirts of Aaron's garment," so his holy influences anoint the heart of every true disciple. Let us take care, then, that in the management of this mission there be nothing in our conduct or temper opposed to the simplicity and purity of the christian dispensation. Let us take care, as individuals and as churches, that we walk in the fear of the Lord; and that we look thus to have the consolations of the Holy Ghost, to be edified and multiplied.

There does not appear to me to be a more important maxim than that contained in Luke xvii. 20,—"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" or, as Doctor Campbell renders it, "*is not ushered in with pomp and parade.*" If this mission is made the instrument of ostentation and gratification, or of amusing the public by a display of gaudy eloquence,—if it is conducted on such a plan as comports rather with the maxims of this world than with "the mind of Christ,"—the usefulness of the society is in that measure destroyed. If it is conducted without prayer, which I am sorry

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to say has not always been sufficiently regarded, nothing can be more calculated to "grieve the Holy Spirit." My brethren, if we look at the manner in which those missions were first conducted, which converted the whole world, we shall find that they were destitute of all human parade, and were conducted with extraordinary simplicity. It was while the church ministered and fasted that they were directed "to send forth Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto they had been called." There were no places sought out as places of theatrical resort: such things were not thought of at that time; nor *could* they be thought of by those who formed themselves solely upon the simplicity of the Scriptures. It is not my wish to give offence to any persons by these remarks: but I could not discharge my conscience as a minister of Christ without making them; not at all with a view to censuring what has been done, or blaming any individual in the present place, but of lifting up my voice against certain dangers to which the corruption of our nature and the state of the world expose us.

All rivalry, also, between different societies for the purpose of promoting missions,—all that rivalry which has not for its object and design the promoting the cause, the knowledge, and the service of God,—is offensive in his sight. Let us guard against that vicious rivalry which shall induce the least disposition to depreciate or hide in silence the success of others; which shall lead us to look coolly on the most splendid acts of missionary labour,

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unless they emanate from ourselves, or bring honour to our party. All these dispositions, as far as they exist in any individual, dispositions which are "of the flesh, and not of the Spirit," are directly contrary to the mind of Jesus Christ, who blended a Paul and an Apollos, who blended the Jews and the Gentiles—men of all characters—in one mass, and impressed upon them all the faith of Christ and the love of immortal souls.

It necessarily results from the doctrine of the text, that all dependence on any other resource than that of the communication of the Spirit, will be found to be delusive, when the Divine Being shews us what work is his own. To "put our trust in an arm of flesh," is to renounce our dependence upon him. There cannot be a double dependence, any more than a double adherence. It is true men must be employed; but the fact of their mere instrumentality should never be lost sight of, and their dependence on the Spirit of God should be ever recognized. "The gold is mine," saith the Lord, "and the silver is mine." Let us not speak on this all-important subject in such a manner as to lead to the idea that the obtaining of money, and the setting in motion a vast apparatus, is all that is necessary to secure the salvation of the heathen. Any language like this is in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Scriptures. If the Spirit of God be the great agent,—if it is his work, and his work alone, and the whole is accomplished by the energy of that mighty Spirit,—how can we secure success by any

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other agency? If we should depend on the accumulation of any property far beyond our present resources, and the Divine Being were to withdraw from us his sacred and enlivening influences, he would leave us in the same situation as he did the Jews, when he said, "Where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble."* They might multiply instruments and extend their labour, but they could not secure the salvation of a single soul—they could not deposit *in the heart* a single sentence of divine truth—they could not form one holy disposition: but if the Spirit of God be "poured out upon us," as we have reason to believe it will be at some time, every other instrument will be subordinated, and must be; and then it will be found that the Divine Being, when he has poured out his Spirit, will never suffer an adequate quantity of property to be wanted. He who has given the Spirit will never suffer his work to be stopped by the want of the riches of the earth: he will sooner turn the very stones of the street into the precious metals, than suffer the means to be wanted of carrying on this work. My brethren, if we can once draw down the Spirit of God on our churches, the rich will contribute their property; the pious will contribute their prayers, and so much of their property as they can afford; and the leisurely will give up their time. This divine agency, when its effects are once really felt in the heart, will enlist into the

* Jer. ii. 28.

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service every power which men possess, and will compel it to yield its quota. "Thou shalt see, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory."

Finally, I would just observe that the doctrine of the text teaches us to regulate our confidence with respect to the success of every particular mission, at the same time that it animates that confidence in regard to the final success of the work itself. We cannot say how long the Spirit may be withheld; but that it is withheld, that the outpouring of it has not yet taken place, we have melancholy evidence. It is plain that it has not been vouchsafed to this society, or to any other, to the extent that we anticipated, so as to produce a total transformation. Great effect has been experienced in the South-Sea islands; and that appears to me to approach the nearest of any to what we are expecting; but even that, delightful as it is, is on a small scale. But the general success has not yet seemed proportional to the extent of the means. "The wood is prepared for the altar, but the fire from heaven has not descended

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upon the sacrifice." The number of missionaries is as great, probably, as that employed at the first promulgation of christianity; but here is the mighty difference,—the Spirit of God, at that period, descended from on high. "The Divine Being bowed the heavens and came down," and infused an immortal energy into the missionaries, to which we are strangers at the present day.

It is proper to inquire, why is not the Spirit of God poured down now?—what is there that has caused the withholding of this spirit? We may be assured there is some reason. The Divine Being is a sovereign, but he is not a capricious being; and we ought to plead with God, and ask why it is that he withholds from us this spirit? We may be assured the time will arrive when deliverance will be wrought in the earth; but hitherto we have "brought forth wind,"—only wind. He "hath not wrought deliverance," though we know deliverance will be wrought. May we not, in the spirit of humble supplication, ask, Why that honour is reserved for other nations and other times?—Why we are permitted to see only the skirt of his garment, and not permitted to see his face?—Why he holds back his blessings, and we contemplate only a few drops of that mighty influence of which the heavens are full, and which he might, and doubtless will, pour down in mighty torrents? My brethren, let the friends of each society, instead of being led for a moment "to sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag," — while they are thankful for what has

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been done,—inquire why they are not permitted to do more, and why the adamantine barriers of impenitence and rejection are permitted to oppose themselves? Propose this question to the philosopher, and he will repeat the language of the ancient prophet, and say, "Hath a nation changed its gods, which are yet no gods?"* We know, my brethren, that no nation ever quitted its gods till Jesus Christ came into the world: we know that no nation has forsaken actual idolatry, much less turned from things present to realise an immortal prospect—to fix its affections on God as the eternal God, except by the energy of the Spirit; but we are encouraged to expect the power and grace of God to accomplish these purposes, and we hear him saying in his word, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this:" and if there be something rendering us unworthy to be the instruments of so great and important a change, let us search it out, and mourn for it before God.

At the same time, my brethren, though we are taught to acquiesce without repining, without murmuring, in the dispensations of God, let us point our views to a future period, when the Spirit will be poured from on high,—when Jesus Christ will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh,—for then "the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." The Divine Being will not frustrate the design his Spirit has excited; he will not cause the holy agitations which have been felt to be in vain; he will not

* Jer. ii. 11.

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suffer those desires which have been excited in the minds of Carey and others, to evaporate without being in some manner fulfilled. Great things have been effected by the instrumentality of those who have gone before us, and we are now employed in the same great work. How many thousands are pouring out their prayers and tears for the spiritual conversion of the heathen! There has been a spiritual movement of divine love whereby many have been rendered willing to spend and be spent, yea, to die for the conversion of the Gentile nations; earnestly desiring to conduct them to the Saviour whom they never saw, but "in whom they believed, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable." But when this Spirit has come from on high, we shall witness a different scene, going far beyond the desire and the effort: then it will be a most glorious æra: we shall see nations casting off their idols, returning to God, "asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward;" then will be again "heard on the high places weeping and supplication because they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God:" then there will be heard, not the cry of the wounded, nor the lamentation of the orphan and the fatherless over parents slain in battle, but sorrow of a more sacred nature; a new burthen pressing on the heart—the burthen of sin. They will look back on the scenes of Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, and at the cross, and feel as much oppressed as if they had heard his groans and his prayers; they will then believe the simple sayings of God; "the powers of

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the world to come," the greatness of eternity, will occupy their attention; they will then look "not at the things which are seen and temporal," but at the sublime and glorious "things which are eternal;" the distance between that period and the judgement day will, in thought, be annihilated; they will feel themselves standing on the threshold of the infinite and everlasting mansion, and their whole souls will be absorbed in the nothingness of time, the grandeur of eternity, the awful hurtfulness of sin, and the infinite importance of the great salvation. Those things which we speak of with freezing accents, and cold hearts, will then be felt in the inmost soul; conviction will seize upon the transgressors, while others will be rejoicing in the Lord, and it will be as it was in the time of the building of the second temple; "the voice of shouting, and the sound of weeping," will be mingled together, as in the time of Ezra. While troops of pilgrims will be pressing towards the celestial city, many millions of prodigals will return to their Father's house, and will lift up their eyes to the Saviour who died for their sin. These things MUST take place,—they did take place at the first preaching of the gospel. By some, such occurrences would be regarded as disorderly. God be praised, there were such disorders as these, and well would it be for us were our religious assemblies frequently interrupted by such disorders. The time will come, assuredly, when "the Spirit will be poured from on high;" and who knows what will be the effect when the Divine

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Being applies the truths of his word to the consciences of his creatures? Then will "the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest:" then, my brethren, all the powers of nature, all the resources of providence, all the advantages that are possessed by men in every variety and state, will jointly contribute to aid the general triumph. "The multitude of camels shall come up; the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord." Kings shall offer their gifts, and the majesty of all earthly sovereigns will bow to the majesty of the Saviour. All the spoils of earthly grandeur will be laid at his feet, and none will be "exalted in that day" but the Lord and his Messiah. This, next to our own salvation, is the only proper object of our solicitude: if we can but attain this,—if we can but witness this,—every thing else will follow: this touches the source and author of all motion; and in proportion as we can engage the Divine Spirit on our side, in that proportion will Omnipotence be exerted, and who can stay his hand?

There are some who do not expect these scenes to be realised; but we say to them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."* Before him all difficulties vanish; it is only the exertion of the same sort of power as every sincere christian has witnessed,—the power of which he is himself the subject; and what

* Matt. xxii. 29.

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reason can he assign why he should have been touched by the Divine Spirit,—"made willing in the day of his power,"—and the same power not be rendered effectual in the breasts of others? The same influence which was extended to a Paul, will effect the renovation of the world. No new power is requisite: it is the same; even that, without which we might "preach in vain," and you "hear in vain;" it need only to be poured from on high, and then "the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Let us, then, in our prayers, especially and earnestly entreat this divine communication. Never let us pray for the baptist mission, or any other, without recognizing distinctly in our prayers our dependence on the divine agency; never let us for a moment lose sight of this, but direct our attention to it as the main object of expectation and hope,—regarding it as indeed the work of God. It is his special prerogative to renew the heart of man, and to build up from the ruins of the fall a temple to his praise; and when this is accomplished, "all the kingdoms of the earth will flow into it,"—the nations that are saved will walk in the light of it: and how can we, who consider ourselves "the temple of the Holy Ghost," be better employed than in imploring him to "send forth his light, and his truth?" Let us address him in the language of the church: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and

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wounded the dragon?" "Where is thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies?*" The church of God is now praying to this effect, and the best pledge of the final triumphs of christianity results from the combined influence of prayer and active exertion in a spirit of dependence. Our earnest desire that the heathen should be converted, and that christianity should be published and received among all nations, may be regarded, we hope, as the earnest and fruit of that Divine Spirit whose more copious effusion will accomplish the work. Let us welcome the rising beam, "the day-star" that ushers in the morning of a brighter day than has ever yet shone upon the earth. Let us fervently pray that the Divine Spirit may be poured out upon the world, and that the Redeemer may "take to him his great power, and reign" universally in the hearts of men.

XI.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.†

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS, NOVEMBER 28, 1820.]

MATTHEW xvi. 1—3.—"*The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting him desired that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red:*

* Isaiah li. 9. lxiii. 15.

† Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

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And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

So violent were the prejudices excited by our Saviour's preaching, that those who could agree in nothing besides, agreed in the attempt to discredit his authority, and destroy the effects of his ministry. An instance of this is presented in the words just read, in which we find the Pharisees and Sadducees forgetting their mutual antipathy in their common hostility to the pretensions of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees, as you are aware, were a sect among the Jews, who had multiplied to an enormous extent their additions to the law of Moses; which, together with the other parts of the Old Testament, they received as inspired. The Sadducees, a sort of religious sceptics, generally supposed to have confined their belief to the missions and writings of Moses, rejected the doctrines which connect us with a future world; the resurrection of the body, and the existence of spirits. These two parties, at variance on all other occasions, concurred on this; and both, "tempting" our Lord in the hope of ruining his reputation, "desired that he would shew them a sign from heaven;" an indication that he was the Messiah, yet more miraculous and convincing, according to *their* idea, than any he had before exhibited. By this "sign from heaven," they probably meant some *direct* manifestation of the divine glory, without that intervention of second causes which seems to have impaired in their

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minds the impression of the miracles they had witnessed. They imagined that an *immediate* vision of the Divine Majesty would afford an evidence of his being the Messiah, more unequivocal and satisfactory than could be afforded by any performances however supernatural. Such a notion was delusive, and arose entirely from the depraved and obdurate state of their minds. When we find those, who are already in possession of sufficient evidence, yet demanding more than is given, we may be sure that, in such cases, no evidence would be sufficient. Accordingly, it is not the practice of the divine government to comply with such unreasonable desires: but, while *he that hath,* or that improves his present advantages, *shall receive abundantly more: from him that hath not,* or that uses not what he has, *even that which he hath shall be taken away.*

From the suggestion of the words first read, I propose to consider some of the most obvious and palpable signs which the present age exhibits of the advancement of our Saviour's kingdom: and I shall take occasion to remark previously, that it is an important part of wisdom,—a duty which as christians we ought not to neglect,—to *discern the signs,* to watch the moral aspect, of the times in which we live. We are not, indeed, called or qualified to penetrate into futurity; but we may study with advantage that portion of providence, in relation to the church and the world, with which we are most nearly connected.

Of the benefits to be derived from this study,

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the first is, that we shall thus learn more of *the intentions and character of the Divine Being*. The providence of God is the execution and developement of his mind. In observing the course of providence, we see the operations of his hand, and read his will as truly in its fulfilment as in his written revelation. Again: our *devotion* should be modified, to a certain extent, by the signs of the times. In our prayers, we may derive encouragement from these to plead with God for the accomplishment of his own gracious designs and promises: we may adapt our humiliation to the demand of the season; acknowledge the hand that wards off impending evils or crowns us with signal favours; and be reminded what benefits we may appropriately implore. And, once more: such a habit of advertence to the prominent features of the age, may be useful in the regulation of our *active* duties. In our exertions to promote the good of mankind and the glory of God, we are not merely to regard his general will as applicable to all times alike; we are to inquire, also, his particular design in reference to the existing state of things; to study what he would have us do at such a particular crisis. Does He appear, for instance, by various concurring events, to be preparing for the more extensive and rapid diffusion of the gospel? Then it becomes our appropriate duty to provide whatever means seem the best adapted to promote that transcendent object. Some persons, who are sufficiently attentive to the more private details of christian

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duty, take but little interest in the fortunes of the universal church: a failure which, in such cases, arises principally from that inattention to the signs of the times, reprehended by our Saviour in the text.

Having offered these suggestions, I shall now advert to some plain, unequivocal, signs and indications of the present age. I call them plain and unequivocal, in distinction from such as may be thought of an ambiguous character. With respect to some of these signs, while events are passing by us, there may be differences of sentiment; differences which will probably disappear when another generation shall look back upon our own times. In contemplating an object, we find it necessary to recede to a certain distance, in order that we may the more comprehensively survey what pressed too closely, and became too prominent, during our nearer approach; and thus the present portion of providence will be better understood, in all its bearings, when the events which compose its principal features shall have been for some time passed. The following remarks, however, will be confined to the most striking peculiarities of the present age.

1. Of these, the first I shall mention is, the great increase of mental exertion. Some periods have been marked by intellectual inaction: the human mind has appeared as in a state of torpor and dormancy: not a luminary has broken the prevailing darkness; not a distinguished name has been left behind: knowledge has been not merely

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stationary, it has not merely not been progressive, it has *retrograded.* Such was that period in which, after the decline of the Platonic philosophy, Aristotle reigned in all the schools, and was idolized as *the secretary of nature,* who *dipt his pen in intellect.* From his dictates there was no appeal; and, what was most remarkable, his empire extended to theology. As nothing can convey a higher idea of the intellectual greatness of that extraordinary man, than the unrivalled despotism he then exercised over human minds, so nothing can present a more humiliating picture of the weakness of those minds, than the depth of mental degradation to which they thus descended. The Reformation was the great instrument in undermining and demolishing that long-established system of intellectual despotism and degradation. Under the light diffused by the reformers, men awoke from the trance of ignorance and infatuation in which they had slept for ages; they felt those energies of thought and reason which had been so long disused; they began to investigate truth for themselves; they started to that career of genius and science which has ever since been rapidly advancing. Had this been the only benefit it produced, the protestant reformation would deserve to be numbered among the noblest achievements of mental energy: viewing it in this light, even infidels have applauded Luther and his associates.

Since that æra the greatest advances have been made in every department of science, physical and

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moral; more especially during the last century, in which the progress of knowledge has been more rapid than, perhaps, during any similar period of human history. In addition even to the grand discoveries of Newton, respecting the laws of nature and the system of the universe, such a mass of varied information has been accumulated, that Newton himself, could he witness the present state of his own science, would be astonished at advances he never anticipated. Every year, nay, almost every day, has added something; while the registers of discovery have found it no easy task to keep pace with the rapidity of its march. The nomenclature of the preceding fifty years has been found so inadequate to the demands of the latter half century, that it has become entirely obsolete; and a new nomenclature may be required by another age. This is remarkably exemplified in the department of chemical science: nor has less been accomplished in moral and political philosophy. The genius of legislation has been greatly elucidated within the present age. The principle of religious toleration and liberty of conscience, which required for its demonstration the reasoning powers of the immortal Locke, is now universally acknowledged. In a word, philosophy has been completely *popularised,* and mingles with every order of society from the palace to the cottage: all approach its illumination, all participate in its benefits.

It is true that we cannot boast, in these latter times, of oratory or poetry equal to that of

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Demosthenes or of Milton. These arts, being derived from nature, the natural emanations of enthusiasm and fancy, are early brought to perfection; and are probably cultivated with less advantage in a more refined state of society. The case is different with respect to the pursuits of science and philosophy: these are permanently and interminably progressive: the induction of facts, the investigation of phenomena and principles, are susceptible of perpetual advancement: and, if it were preposterous to suppose that those great masters of poetry and eloquence will ever be superseded, or perhaps even equalled, it were not less preposterous to deny that the present amount of knowledge,—immense as it now appears,—may yet, to a future generation, appear comparatively inconsiderable. Invention has exhausted its powers: the stores of philosophy are inexhaustible. In every successive age, it must be allowed, the increase of science, though continual, becomes less and less observable: it is during the infancy of knowledge that its growth is most apparent; afterwards, the vast general extent renders us less sensible of every new accession; just as in a large assemblage of buildings, like that which composes your own city, we are scarcely aware of its constant enlargement; while, in a village, every particular addition becomes an object of attention. Thus less surprise is excited in the present age, than would have been felt in any preceding period, by every fresh augmentation of our intellectual stores. It is an age of universal curiosity, in which

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ignorance is felt as a calamity. The extensive circulation of books, and the multitude of cultivated minds, distinguish this period beyond comparison with any that has preceded it. Never before was that prophetic feature of the latter days so strikingly exhibited—"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

2. A second feature by which the present age is distinguished, is an increased attention to the instruction of the lower classes.

The time has been, when the education of youth in the inferior walks of society was entirely neglected: it is only during a later period that the first impulse was given to that vast machine of universal instruction, which continues to operate with increasing energy. It is painful to reflect on the unnatural separation, in whatever relates to the *mind*, which formerly subsisted between the common people and those who fill the higher ranks of the community; the monstrous chasm which divided the gross barbarism of the former from the superfluous refinement of the latter. It seemed as if an entire oblivion had taken place, in reference to their original, fraternal relation, as members of one family, children of a common father. There is little, it is true, in poverty, to gratify the taste or the imagination; but it is time, surely, to lose sight of those merely adventitious accompaniments which glitter on the eye of fancy and refinement,—time to recognise, in the humblest portions of society, partakers of our nature, with all its high prerogatives and awful destinies:

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it is time to remember that our distinctions are exterior and evanescent, our resemblance real and permanent; that all is transient, but what is moral and spiritual; that the only graces we can carry with us into another world, are graces of divine implantation; and that, amidst the rude incrustations of poverty and ignorance, there lurks an imperishable jewel,—a principle transcending in its value the whole material creation,—a soul, susceptible of the highest spiritual beauty, destined, perhaps, to adorn the celestial abodes, and to shine for ever in the mediatorial diadem of the Son of God! *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.*

Among the instances of an increased attention to the welfare of the lower classes, may be numbered those improvements in the penal code of our laws, which have been proposed by a living lawyer,* who appears to me at least, to have understood the true nature of legal justice much better than it has been comprehended heretofore. When so much light is thrown upon a subject,—before very imperfectly investigated,—the most important amendments may be anticipated in the laws, especially those which affect the criminal's life; and we may hope the time is not distant when, in conformity with the Divine Standard, the crime of murder shall be regarded as the only proper subject of capital punishment.

In short, we appear at length to have become sensible that every thing merits our earnest attention

* Sir James Mackintosh.

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and encouragement, which tends to promote the intellectual, moral, and civil improvement of that vast portion of the population, in which the majority of numbers and physical strength resides, and which virtually includes the destiny of the nation; that broad basis of the pyramid of society, which, while it continues sound, affords stability to the whole, but by a rent in which the entire fabric must be endangered. Nothing in nature can be conceived more frightful, nothing more fatal to the existence of an empire, than an unprincipled, profligate, irreligious, turbulent populace; quiet perhaps at the present moment, but ready on the first occasion to break out into fury and violence. It is a volcano, covered with a surface of verdure, but prepared to scatter desolation around on the first eruption that may disturb its fearful quiescence: it is an edifice raised upon a mine, and constantly exposed to the peril of an explosion from the precarious ground and terrible materials beneath! We have witnessed, in a neighbouring kingdom, an example of the horrors to which a nation may be subjected by the unrestrained depravity of an uninstructed and irreligious populace—horrors, which Heaven avert from ourselves! which exceed the conception of the most gigantic imagination! For nothing, in the most savage part of the brute creation, can parallel those fiery excesses of popular passion, which desolate whatever is *social*, whatever is *sacred*, in the institutions of mankind! But, on "the evils of popular ignorance," it is the less necessary to enlarge here, as

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the subject has been recently illustrated by a living writer,* whose genius pours new light over every topic that engages his notice.

3. A third, and a most favourable characteristic of the present times, is the improved state of preaching, and the more abundant supply of the public means of grace. The preaching of the gospel has been appointed and acknowledged by God as the grand instrument of converting sinners and saving souls: the doctrine of Christ crucified (however it may be regarded by the disputers of this world) has been proved, in every age, to be "the power of God to the salvation of every one that believes;" to be the weakness of God, which is stronger than men, the foolishness of God, which is wiser than men. During the latter part of the last century, and down to the present time, there has been a manifest increase and improvement of christian instruction. Evangelical truth has been administered in a purity and abundance to which preceding ages bear no proportion. And here, in justice to the established clergy of the realm, I cannot but remark the great advance in piety and diligence which they have exhibited during the last half century. They have gone forth in numbers, rekindling the lamp of heavenly truth where before it had burned with a dim and sickly ray; they have explored and cultivated many a neglected spot, into which other labourers could not (for obvious reasons) gain admission with equal facilities of influence; and far be it from any of

* Rev. John Foster.

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their dissenting brethren to regard their success with any other than a *godly* jealousy, a *holy* emulation!

Turning from our own country to heathen lands, we behold yet more striking indications of an improving age. The present is the very era of missions: all the various denominations of christians, as with one great simultaneous impulse, have started up from their long slumber of missionary inaction, awakened on a sudden to the magnitude and obligation of this neglected enterprise. There seems to be a universal feeling among christians that the time is come for fulfilling our Saviour's last command, *going forth into all the world, and teaching all the nations;* and that, if we should any longer hold our peace, *the very stones in our streets would cry out against us!* The Spirit of Christ no longer contains itself within its accustomed bounds: it breaks forth from its undue confinement, and spreads its influence in every direction. No part of the earth so remote, so forsaken, that has not begun to be invaded, that is not at least proposed to be attempted, by some of those devoted champions who have gone forth in the peaceful warfare of the gospel. Nor are the symptoms of preparation less favourable among the *heathen* themselves: a general spirit of readiness appears to be presented in the islands of the Pacific, in the districts of the Cape, of India, and America. Every thing seems to announce that though the labourers are as yet but few, the fields are already white for the approaching harvest.

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4. The advancement of the Bible as the great and only standard of christian faith and practice, is a fourth remarkable feature of our times. The Scriptures have always been professedly received as the highest authority among christians; but never was that authority so publicly and completely recognized as in the present age. The church of Rome early impaired, and at length almost entirely abolished, the authority of the sacred volume, by her multiplied additions to its contents, as well as by her extreme ignorance of its genuine instructions. Her priests were exalted from humble ministers of the word into arbitrary *legislators:* for he that has the power of annexing to the law whatever interpretation he may please, is not an administrator of the law, but a *tyrant.* As an instance of the disuse and oblivion into which the Scriptures had fallen among the Romish clergy, it is related of the celebrated missionary, Xavier, that, having met with a copy of part of the New Testament before his going out to India, he resolved to take it with him, as he thought it might be of use in his missionary labours. What a change in the state of the christian world, with regard to the estimation in which the Scriptures are held, has taken place since the days of Xavier! That eminent person—who possessed, one would hope, amidst all his errors, some real piety—thought he might as well take part of the New Testament with him when he went as a missionary to India; he conceived it might possibly be of some use! The Bible is now carried abroad in

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the front of the ministry; and the missionary preachers aim, as much as possible, to lose themselves in the effulgence of its heavenly light. It is a remarkable fact, that the most devoted, the most successful advocate, beyond comparison with any other, which the Bible Society has yet found, is himself a priest of the Romish church;* a man who presents the extraordinary phenomenon of a popish clergyman protesting, in the very bosom of his church, against her iniquities; and declaring his determination to persevere, in spite of the devil and the prophetic beast, in diffusing those Scriptures, of which he has already circulated several hundred thousand copies.

Such exertions, it is reasonable to believe, will prove instrumental to the purifying of Christendom from papal corruptions at no very remote period. In the event of a persecution among the Romish clergy being occasioned by such exertions, a secession, similar to that of the protestant reformers, might probably once more take place within their own body. God grant that such may be the issue! Would to God that the apocalyptic warning might be heard and obeyed by multitudes of that corrupted hierarchy, which owes the perpetuation of its influence to the suppression of the Scriptures,—"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues!" Never before was there such a universal consent among christians as to the supremacy and sufficiency of the Bible in all

* Leander Van Ess.

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religious questions: never before was the maxim of Chillingworth so practically acknowledged, that "The Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of protestants." In all disputed points, it is now agreed that we should appeal solely to "the law and the testimony;" and, where these are silent, that we should imitate their silence.

5. As a fifth "sign of the times," may be mentioned that increasing harmony which prevails among the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ. At last the central principle of union begins to be extensively felt and acknowledged: amidst all the diversities of external discipline or subordinate opinion, the seed of God, the principle of spiritual and immortal life implanted in the soul, is recognized by the sincere followers of the Lamb as the transcendent point of mutual attraction in the midst of minor differences. Even protestants and catholics, influenced by a kindred piety, can now cordially embrace each other; as in the case of that zealous professor of the Romish church to whom I before referred, who corresponds in terms of cordial affection with the protestant secretary of the Bible Society for its foreign department. The essential spirit of religion begins to assert its ascendency over all beside. The most enlightened, the *selectest* christians in every denomination, are ready to cultivate an intercourse with kindred spirits, with all who hold the same essential principles, in any other. Formerly, such an intercourse was rarely indulged, and accompanied with reserves and apprehensions: good

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men looked more at their distinctions than their resemblances, at points of repulsion than those of attraction. Now the case is altered; and it may be truly said that, in this respect, *the former things are passed away.* Now, the saying of our common master has received a fulfilment almost unknown before: "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, even by the love ye bear to each other.*"

The reason why christians have been so tardy in arriving at a disposition so much to be desired, is principally to be found in those exaggerated notions of the importance of church government under some particular form, which so long swayed the minds of excellent men: the difference of outward garb concealed the unity of the spirit which inwardly animated their hearts alike. In the *seminal* principles of their religion, in their equal dependence on an incarnate Redeemer and a sanctifying Spirit, they have now discovered a centre of attraction,—a common chord to which all their hearts vibrate in unison: and thus, without the smallest sacrifice of their respective sentiments or practices, they can indulge the most entire affection, and exert the most zealous cooperation. Can it be supposed that such an improvement will not silence the old sarcasm of infidels, derived from the prevailing dissensions of those who professed themselves the disciples of one Master? Can it be questioned whether the christian army, thus closely embodied, will prosecute with redoubled vigour their warfare against the powers of darkness? If the kingdom

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of Satan, when not divided against itself, is able to stand, can we doubt that the family of Jesus Christ, no longer disunited, will prosper in its consentaneous exertions? Besides which, the unanimity of christians is at once an indication and a presage of the Holy Spirit's more copious effusion on the church; at once an effect and an earnest of the love of Christ to his followers; while it affords a delightful emblem and foretaste of that perfect state in which all are for ever united in harmony and affection.

6. In the last place, I cannot but number, among the prognostics of the destined triumph of christianity, that extension of civil and religious liberty by which the present times are distinguished. In this view, I cannot but cordially rejoice in the political revolutions which have recently taken place in Spain, Portugal, and Naples. Nothing could be imagined more unfavourable to the cause of religion than the prior condition of those kingdoms, in which a despotic tyranny prevailed alike in the church and the state. Such revolutionary commotions among the nations must be still expected, until the arrival of that happy period when liberty, civil and religious, shall be universally established.

The enjoyment of civil liberty is essential to the developement and exertion of the best and noblest energies of the human mind. Deprived of this, nothing truly great can flourish in the moral world. There exists, indeed, an indissoluble connexion between the civil and the religious freedom of a

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nation; and, whatever may be thought of other considerations, every friend to the prosperity of religion must rejoice in the advancement of that liberal and enlightened policy under which alone it is favoured and fostered. It is only under a free representative government that this can be the case. Never did religious liberty flourish in the chilling, deadly atmosphere of despotism: it can open and spread only in the sunshine of political freedom. As the greater includes the less, the civil implies also the religious liberty of a state. Religion grows and blooms among the highest and most palmy branches of the tree of liberty, and ripens in luxuriance among its topmost boughs. This is the natural, established, order of things, in the present world: and, let it be remembered, we are not entitled to expect any *miracles*, properly so called, to facilitate the coming of our Saviour's kingdom. In the whole course of missionary enterprise there has not been a single check upon the accustomed laws of providence, not one interruption of the connexion which subsists betwixt primary and secondary causes, not one deviation from the ancient course of nature. It is by a favourable arrangement of political circumstances that religion is most likely to be advanced; by the establishment of that genuine and legitimate freedom, which is equally removed from the extremes of anarchy on the one side, and tyranny on the other. It is this that seems to be the precise temperature, the genial climate, of religion: and doubtless God will prepare his own way in this as in every other respect:

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every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked rendered straight, the rough places plain; and all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

In glancing at the different institutions which have arisen in these later times for the moral and spiritual benefit of mankind, it is pleasing and striking to observe how exactly they have fitted in, and, as it were, *dove-tailed* with each other. First appeared the missionaries, as pioneers to break up the ground and open the way; then the Bible Society followed; and, at last, the system of education completed the design. Each arose, in its order, to sustain and aid the others. Had any one of these existed alone, it would have proved inefficient for want of the rest. As it is, the finger of Providence is discernible in the very succession in which these institutions made their appearance; while, in their union and cooperation, they constitute an apparatus completely adapted to promote the christian renovation of the world: regarded in the order of *means*, the teachers, the lesson, and the power of reading it, appear well adapted to *make the man of God perfect in every good word and work*. We speak, you will observe, of external, instrumental preparations: there is still needed, as you are aware, another and a higher *preparation of the heart in man;* a spirit within us, which must be imparted from above. The machinery is provided, but the Spirit alone can move the wheels.

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With respect to the institution for which I have the honour to be an humble advocate on this occasion, if there be any force in the preceding remarks, few words are necessary to recommend it to your patronage. As you would live in a land of Bibles and readers of the Bible,—in a nation dignified as a seminary of religious instruction; as you would desire, when called to quit the present stage of being, to leave your children in a nation of christians; it becomes you, more especially in a season of public alarm, to support an institution which justly assumes the name of *national*. If the man who rescues from barrenness a neglected portion of the country, and spreads over its face fertility and beauty, deserves and obtains our praise, shall *that society* solicit our support in vain, which rescues from all the evils of ignorance multitudes of those in the humbler walks of life, who might otherwise *perish for lack of knowledge*; while it opens their understandings, at least in a degree, to understand the Scriptures of eternal truth and life? It is impossible to doubt that such an institution is one of the great means which the Divine Being employs for the accomplishment of his own great end. He does not christianize the world by magic: we are not to expect religion to descend from heaven, or to rise upon the earth like a beautiful vision! It will indeed descend from heaven, and arise upon the earth; but this will be by regular, appointed, adapted means; by means such as those which are now set at work, and require our continued assistance:

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means which afford an omen of the desired success; since we cannot conceive why all this energy should have been impressed on the minds of men, if not for the providential accomplishment of one grand result—the transformation of the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

XII.

THE LOVE OF LIFE.*

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONS, NOVEMBER, 1820.]

JOB ii. 4.—*And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.*

THOUGH these words were uttered by the father of lies, they are no lie. The truth of a communication does not always depend on the character of those who convey it.

The expression might perhaps be more properly rendered, "skin *upon* skin," or "skin *after* skin:" skins, of which the uses are not easily enumerated, being the principal article of property and exchange in a primitive and pastoral state of society.

I propose briefly to consider the principle of attachment to life, so emphatically asserted in these words; some of the reasons for which it is implanted; and some improvements which may be derived from the subject.

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

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I. The love of life is the simplest and strongest principle of nature. It operates *universally*, on every part of the brute creation, as well as on every individual of the human race; *perpetually*, under all circumstances, the most distressing as well as the most pleasing; and with a *power* peculiar to itself,—while it arms the feeble with energy, the fearful with courage, whenever an occasion occurs for defending life, whenever the last sanctuary of nature is invaded, and its dearest treasure endangered. This mysterious principle does not act with a variable force, dependent on the caprices of will or the dictates of reason: it operates with a steady, constant influence, as a law of nature, insensible and yet powerful. It corresponds, in the animated world, with the great principle of gravitation in the material system, or with the centripetal force, by which the planets are retained in their proper orbits, and resist their opposite tendency to fly off from the centre. The most wretched, not less than the most prosperous,—those who seem to possess nothing that can render life desirable, not less than those who are surrounded by all its pleasures,—are bound to life as by a principle of central attraction, which extends its influence to the last moments of expiring nature. We see men still clinging to life, when they have lost all for which they appeared to live. A striking instance of this has been recently exhibited by that extraordinary individual,* who, rather than lose his life in the scenes of his

* Buonaparte.

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renown, has exchanged the pinnacle of power and fame for the deepest degradation and obscurity. There are few qualities that command greater admiration than the superiority to the love of life and the dread of dissolution: as we admire things in proportion to their difficulty and rarity, we are astonished by that heroic bravery which can triumph over the first law of our nature. The Scriptures frequently recognize and appeal to this fundamental principle: thus, in apparent allusion to the text, our Saviour demands, "What shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*," or, as the word literally denotes, his *life*? The only promise annexed to any of the ten commandments, exhibits life as the chief earthly good, and its prolongation as the reward of filial piety: while, in the Proverbs, Wisdom is represented as having "length of days in her right hand, in her left, riches and honour."

II. I proceed to assign the reasons, or some of the reasons, for which this instinctive attachment to life is so deeply implanted in our nature.

1. The first and most obvious reason respects the preservation of life itself. That which, of all our possessions, is the most easily lost or injured, is that on the continuance of which all other things depend. The preservation of life requires incessant attention and exertion; the material requisite to feed the vital flame, must be collected from innumerable sources at great expense of time and trouble: the spark of life is perpetually exposed to the danger of extinction, like a lamp

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carried in a stormy night, that requires to be covered by the hand, and seems every moment ready to expire. Nothing but the strongest attachment to life could secure it, amidst continual exposures, from sudden or premature destruction: without the operation of the self-preserving instinct, man would be literally like a shadow, that is here to-day and gone to-morrow. On the first departure of prosperity, on the first preponderance of sorrow over joy, in this chequered scene,—in which the colours of good and evil are so constantly intermingled that it is often difficult to say which predominates over the other,—how many, unrestrained by the natural love of life, would forsake their stations; how few, unsupported by attachment to being, would persevere in their course to the end, or "run with patience the race set before them!" Our first father would probably have fulfilled, in the letter, the sentence he incurred, and died on the very day of his transgression, thus destroying the human race in their original, had it not been for the benevolent care of his Creator, by which his existence, and the desire of its continuance, were secured for the great purpose of his moral probation. For life, we cannot forget, is, in its highest use, the season of our trial for an eternal state of being. This is the point of view in which its preservation becomes unspeakably interesting. It stands connected with nothing less than the incarnation, sufferings, and glory, of the Son of God; and, whatever is the importance of those stupendous mysteries, the

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same is the importance of human life, considered as the "time of our visitation!" The results of the whole process of redemption, the accomplishment of the greatest designs of the Deity, are involved in the continuance of this probationary state of existence.

2. A second purpose answered by the principle we are considering, is the promotion of industry and labour. Life must be loved, in order that it may be preserved; and preserved, in order that it may be employed. The original denunciation of death was preceded by the sentence of a life of labour: "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the ground.*" In every other state of society, and perhaps in none so much as in the most refined state, the greater part of the community must necessarily be subjected to labour. Under the best possible form of government, some must produce what is to be enjoyed by others. This unavoidable condition of subjection and servitude will be attended, in many cases, by great hardship and suffering. In such circumstances, nothing but that strong attachment to life, of which we are speaking, could reconcile the weary sufferers to a voluntary continuance in a state that entails so much endurance. Yet, while every humane person must regard such instances of excessive toil with compassion, and desire to alleviate them so far as he may be able; this laborious condition of the multitude should be considered as a dispen-

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sation of mercy blended with judgement. For what would be the state of society, disturbed as even now it is by crimes, if the multitudes of those, who are at present confined by labour, were let loose upon the public in all the wantonness of a licentious imagination and unbridled passions? Reflect for a moment, what misery and desolation must arise from such a mass of depravity, such an accumulation of cupidity and malevolence, abandoned, without any fixed employment, to its own turbulent impulses! This, it must be acknowledged, is a melancholy picture of human nature; but it is such as truth requires. How great a benefit, therefore, that necessary condition of labour, which acts as a barrier of defence against the wildness of human passions, and says, as it were, to that tempestuous ocean, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther!" But the desire of preserving life is the strongest incentive to all this salutary industry and toil.

3. A third object to which the same principle is subservient, is the protection of life from the hand of violence. Without some strong restraining sentiment, the life of individuals would be exposed to continual danger from the disordered passions of others. The first crime, of a social nature, committed by man, was the extinction of his brother's life; and the first penal law, enacted by God, was directed against a repetition of that crime: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The love of life, so strongly felt in every bosom, inspires it with a proportionate

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horror of any act that would invade the life of another. Every one burns with indignation against an assassin, as against his own personal enemy; every one feels interested in the discovery of such a criminal, and would consider himself *honoured* in stepping forward to drag before the tribunal of justice one who is regarded as if he had injured every partaker of his nature! This universal horror, and exposure to the public vengeance, which peculiarly attaches to the crime of murder in all civilized states of society, cannot but operate as a powerful and important safeguard of human life. The magistrate and the law owe their whole protective efficacy to that sentiment of attachment to existence, which is a *law written on every heart.*

III. In adding a brief improvement of this subject, we may infer,

1. The fall of man; the universal apostasy of our nature from the state in which it originally proceeded from the Divine Author. Created with this inextinguishable desire of existence, we are destined to dissolution: our nature includes two contradictory principles; the certainty of death, and the attachment to life. This fact affords the clearest evidence that we are now placed in an unnatural, disordered, disjointed condition; that a great and awful change has passed upon our race since our first father came from the hand of God. And this change must be owing to *ourselves;* it cannot be ascribed to our *Creator*, without the supposition of a sufficient cause in our own

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misconduct. Here revelation breaks the silence of nature, while it tells us that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all, because all have sinned.* On any other hypothesis, the problem is inexplicable; for, can the Father of the universe, himself the source of all created tenderness, be conceived to have thus treated his own offspring, without a real and sufficient *cause?* Can malevolence and misery issue from the bosom of infinite goodness and love? Can He who gave us life, who bound us to it by so strong a tie of attachment, deprive us of it, and doom us to a corruption from which nature recoils, without a necessity arising from ourselves? Let any one that is a parent judge by his own parental feelings,—according to the appeal of our Saviour himself, founded upon this analogy. But the Scripture makes all clear: we are like the potter's vessel described by Jeremiah, which was at first made good, but was marred after it was made: *"How is the gold become dim! and the fine gold changed! The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us, for we have sinned!"*

2. But the subject may serve to remind us, also, of the salvation which provided us the antidote to our ruined condition. Every human being, it is true, is treated as a criminal, who, though he may be reprieved for a time, must expect to suffer the penalty of the law he has violated;—every individual, in his turn, is led forth to his destiny of death. This, however, is consistent with the plan of salvation. It is a *restorative* dispensation under

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which we are placed: we are not treated as innocent,—as if we had never offended,—but as criminals chastised for disobedience, while they are placed on trial for mercy. The deluge presented a grand monument of the divine wrath on sin; and a smaller exhibition of that wrath is repeated in the death of every human being. In such a situation, what we want is *life;* and this is abundantly offered. *Eternal life is the gift of God by Jesus Christ!* "*I,*" said Jesus Christ, "*I am the life! I am the bread of life! Whosoever believeth in me shall live for ever!*" "*The life,*" says John, "*was manifested: whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!*" Such are some of the last accents of inspiration. As the value of a medicine is proportioned to the malignity of a disease,—how earnest should be our desire, how grateful our acceptance, of such a remedy! To pass from death to life; to triumph in the prospect and approach of the last enemy; to enjoy even here many a delightful foretaste of the heavenly immortality; to experience a vital union with the Father of spirits, and hereafter to attain the consummation of this union, and bask for ever in the brightness of His presence;—*behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us! How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* Such neglect involves a degree of guilt and infatuation which it will require eternity to deplore, and eternity to comprehend!

3. As a third improvement, connected with what has been observed, let me remind you of the

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medium by which this divine life is imparted and received. There must be a medium of contact between the benefit and the subject of that benefit; between the eternal life provided, and the Spirit for which it is provided. This connecting medium is faith. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ.* Faith is the link of union between the salvation as prepared and perfect *without* ourselves, and our own personal being. This is beautifully, though briefly, expressed by Peter, when he assures the cripple whom he had healed, that the cure had been effected through the medium of *faith*: "*His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man whole.*" *Faith* was as necessary in the subject of the cure, as the *name* itself on which his faith relied. The work of the Spirit of Christ on the heart, is as necessary to our salvation as the work of Christ himself,—his obedience unto death, and his intercession in heaven.

4. In the last place, the subject concurs with the occasion to remind us of the duty, the obligation under which we lie, to impart the knowledge and enjoyment of these vital, eternal blessings, to our suffering fellow-sinners. The *civil*, and merely *temporal* benefits of christianity, are great: the water of life, in its passage through a country, diffuses innumerable improvements wherever it pursues its peaceful course;—the very *leaves of the tree of life* are given *for the healing of the nations.* But far be it from us to recommend the civil as the *great* and *ultimate* blessings of the gospel: these

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are of a *spiritual* and *eternal* nature; furnishing a perfect antidote to the dread of death—a perfect satisfaction for the desire of life, so deeply implanted in the human breast.

XIII.

NOTES OF THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

TRANSCRIBED FROM THE MANUSCRIPT OF MR. HALL.

"Behold the Lamb of God."

I. The import of this appellation.

1. The peculiar features of His personal character.
2. The design of His death.

1. His personal character. His innocence. His patience. "Such a High-Priest became us, &c."

2. He was the Paschal Lamb. Exod. xii.

Draw the parallel in several particulars. Both sacrifices the instrument of effecting a great deliverance. The benefit of both, moral, not physical. The lamb must be perfect, offered by and for all the people. Blood sprinkled. Not a bone broken. Time of offering.

II. The purport of the exclamation,—that He is an object of attention. Its most proper object. Three qualities entitled to attention.

1. Intrinsic greatness. An incarnate Deity, the Ruler of all things, the mysterious Mediator and Advocate.

2. Newness. What so new as the invisible Creator clothed in human flesh—The Ancient of Days cradled as an infant;—He who upholdeth all things sinking under a

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weight of suffering;—the Lord of glory expiring on the cross;—the Light of the world sustaining an awful eclipse;—the Sun of Righteousness immerged in the shadow of death?

3. The relation an object bears to our interest. The Lamb of God a most interesting object to all classes of men: (1.) To sinners; (2.) To saints."*

ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON,

AS REPRESENTED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

I. Import of the appellation, "Lamb of God."

1. Features of the personal character of Christ: (1.) Innocence; (2.) Patience.

2. Design of his appearance.

Points of resemblance between His sacrifice and the Passover. In each, (1.) A great deliverance achieved; (2.) A destruction, otherwise inevitable, averted; (3.) The benefit moral, not physical; (4.) The personal qualities of the victims similar; (5.) The blood required to be sprinkled; (6.) The sacrifice to be regarded by the whole congregation; (7.) The time of the offering the same; (8.) No bone to be broken; (9.) The passover prepared by fire, as an emblem of torture.

II. Design of the exclamation, "Behold!"

An object worthy of supreme attention from all:

1. From sinners. Three qualities which command attention, exhibited here in the highest degrees: (1.) *Greatness;* (2.) *Novelty;* (3.) *Usefulness.*

2. From believers.

3. From the redeemed in glory.

4. From the holy angels.

5. From the Divine Being.

* These notes give the plan of the sermon as it was preached at Bedford: at Bristol the application of the text was extended, as the following sketch represents, to *all* orders of beings.

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THE LAMB OF GOD — HIS CHARACTER — HIS SACRIFICE — AND HIS CLAIM TO UNIVERSAL ATTENTION.

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, NOVEMBER, 1820, AND AGAIN AT BEDFORD, MARCH, 1821.]

JOHN i. 35, 36.—*Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!**

THE forerunner of our Lord manifested a peculiar anxiety to impress the minds of his hearers with a conviction that he was not himself the *Messiah*. Yet there appears to have existed a party among his disciples, who entertained an improper attachment to his ministry, preferring it to that of our Lord. Their disciples constituted two distinct classes: the partizans of John, disposed to exalt his pretensions greatly beyond their real nature and his own assertions, seem to have countenanced the opinion that he was the great expected personage. To counteract such a fatal misconception, the Baptist embraced every opportunity of referring his followers to Jesus Christ, as well as of explaining his own character. He was, as he represented, "the voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord;" he was "the friend of the Bridegroom," not the Bridegroom himself: and,

* The present transcript is the result of the notes taken by the Rev. T. Grinfield, at Bristol, collated with the notes taken at Bedford.

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with the same view, he uttered, on two occasions, the declaration contained in the passage just read. The testimony there expressed is not the first which he had borne to Christ: it appears that on the preceding day he had announced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world:" and, as the evangelist relates, in the text, "Again the *next day after* John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, *Behold the Lamb of God!*"

While we admire the disinterestedness of this great man in endeavouring to convince his converts that Jesus Christ was infinitely his superior, we cannot help supposing that, probably, his ministry and his life were the sooner closed, in consequence of the inordinate attachment of his adherents. It was unfit that he should remain as a rival to the Saviour: he was therefore withdrawn from the scene, and his ministry prematurely closed, that every degree of confidence for salvation might be removed from the creature, to be fixed on the *Saviour* alone.

In considering the testimony borne to Jesus Christ in the text, I shall direct your attention, first, to the *import of the appellation;* and then to the *purport of the exclamation,* as it may be understood to express the *claim which Jesus Christ possesses to the attention of every order of beings.*

I. The *import of the appellation,* "the Lamb of God." There are *two* things which, in all probability, John had in his view when he used this appellation: the distinguishing features of our

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Saviour's *personal character*, and the great *design of his appearance and death.*

1. In the first place, the expression, "Lamb of God," has respect to the *peculiar features*, the *personal character of Christ.*

In the Scriptures, as perhaps in every known language of mankind, a *lamb* has been selected as the popular symbol of *innocence* and *patience.* These were qualities that peculiarly distinguished our Saviour, and formed, on every occasion, the most conspicuous features of his character.

(1.) He was a perfect pattern of *innocence.* As one of his apostles describes him, "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." His freedom from every taint of original sin was secured by his miraculous conception: hence the angel at his nativity declared to the Virgin Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and, therefore, that *holy* thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the *Son of God.*" As he advanced in age, all his actions were completely consonant with the law of God. He could say to his bitterest enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He could affirm that, when Satan came, he had nothing in Christ. Even the opponents of christianity have never attempted to impugn the moral character of its Author. It was *necessary* that "the Lamb of God" should be "without spot or blemish." "Such a High-priest *became* us;" because, as an *example*, he could not have been explicitly proposed to our imitation, had the slightest imperfection attached to himself; and,

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as a *sacrifice* for sin, he could not have been acceptable in the eye of infinite purity and justice, had he been any other than a spotless victim. Accordingly, his conduct was, in every particular, blameless and virtuous. In the most trying situations, under every form of temptation, we find him never failing: there appears nothing in his character in the *smallest* degree inconsistent with the idea of absolute human perfection. The greatest absence of every thing like malevolence,—of every thing merely selfish,—appears in all his actions. His miracles were always miracles of *mercy and beneficence;* his omnipotence was exerted *only* to do *good:* it seemed as if the *secret* of his power resided *only* in benefiting *others,* and relieving the miseries of those who surrounded him; as if he *existed* only for *them,* and became the most helpless of beings when *his own* interest was concerned. Innocence is a negative term, it properly denotes only the absence of faults and offences; in this respect it formed but a *part* of his character. *His* innocence was crowned with infinite *beneficence.*

(2.) A second, and an equally distinguished feature of his character, implied in the appellation of a *lamb,*—is his *patience.* "The Son of Man," as he said of himself, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to *give his life a ransom* for many." He bowed to the will of his Father, and was "*obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross." In the midst of injuries and insults, the most unmerited and aggravated that were ever

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suffered, he exhibited a perfect pattern of patient resignation. He never resented the violence of his enemies: "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." There was indeed *one* instance in which "he opened his mouth:"—arraigned before the high-priest, he answered not a word; until, in reply to the demand whether he was the Son of God, he answered in the affirmative; thus breaking silence before his enemies *only* when his confession insured his condemnation to death. The miraculous powers he possessed over nature and the minds of men, he never exerted to avert his own sufferings, or avenge his wrongs upon his persecutors. Though the elements were at his disposal, and demons subject to his command, yet, in the crisis of his affliction, nothing was visible but compassion for the guilty: "Father," he cried, "forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Nor would he suffer his disciples to retaliate the injuries he received: he rebuked Peter when he drew the sword on Malchus; he rebuked his disciples when they would have called down fire on the Samaritans, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Gentleness and tenderness, a sensibility to the sufferings of others, and an indifference to his own,—these formed the most prominent traits of his character: in *these* he places the *essence* of his religion, so far as it is practical and relative to others. Of *other* virtues, we may say that they form *parts* of the christian

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character; but *these* are emphatically the christian *spirit* itself: in proportion as we are patient, compassionate, forbearing, forgiving, and ready even to *suffer* for the good of others, we *have* "the mind of Christ."

It was thus that he illustrated, in his own example, the nature and genius of the gospel dispensation, as superior to every other. None of his predecessors in the church of God could compare with himself here. The *law* was a *severe* dispensation; its tendency was not so much to cherish the milder virtues, the lamb-like graces of the gospel. Moses, though "the meekest of men" under that economy, was overtaken by the impetuosity of his spirit when he dashed in pieces the tables inscribed by the finger of God. The miracles of Elijah and Elisha were sometimes destructive: the former commanded fire from heaven, the latter bears from the wood, to consume his enemies. John the Baptist was austere in his manners, and terrific in his preaching: there was in him much *moral grandeur*, but it was of a savage and uncultivated aspect; it resembled the lonely and severe character of the wilderness in which he appeared: he was "the axe laid to the root of the trees;" the son of thunder, commissioned to summon the guilty before the tribunal, and denounce judgement on every unfruitful professor. But Jesus Christ was mild, affable, social, compassionate; "the friend of publicans and sinners;" who came to "feed his flock like a shepherd, to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in

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his bosom." When he beheld the city of Jerusalem, he wept over it: when he said to all who heard him, "Learn of me," he could truly and peculiarly add, as at once an example and encouragement to his disciples, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." So well might he be styled, with a view to the features of his character, "the Lamb of God."

2. But we shall form a very inadequate idea of the full import of John's expression, if we confine it to the *example* of Jesus Christ. This is not the only, nor perhaps the *principal* view, in which we are to understand the appellation, "Lamb of God!" There is *another* object of the highest importance to *us*, and to which his innocence and patience were requisite. He appeared not merely as a pattern of holiness; though, in this respect, we have seen in him an unrivalled preeminence above all the messengers of God: but he is to be principally regarded as the *Saviour*, "who taketh," or *beareth*, "away the sin of the world." That the Baptist, in calling Jesus Christ "the Lamb of God," had a reference to his *sacrificial* character, is manifest from the explanatory clause he added on the preceding occasion—"who taketh away the sin of the world." The *example* of Christ, however perfect, had no proper power to "take away sin:" the best example, as we know, has but a feeble influence in correcting depravity, and none whatever in removing guilt. It is unnecessary, however, to multiply words in *proof* of this doctrine; because it is our privilege, on the present occasion, to address those who are continually reminded of

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Christ as the only mediator between God and man. In the appellation employed by the Baptist there is then, secondly, a distinct reference to the *great design of his appearance and death.* It points him out as the Lamb which God provided and accepted. It marks the *sacrificial* character of Christ, prefigured by the legal offerings. This Divine Lamb fulfilled all that was signified by those ancient sacrifices, which consisted principally of lambs; and especially all that was represented by the paschal lamb. A lamb was offered daily, in the morning and evening, in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple: but the paschal sacrifice was solemnized with a peculiar attention and publicity once in every year. The Jews regarded this as the most important of all their observances. It was the most ancient of them all, instituted on their departure from Egypt, in commemoration of their deliverance from the destroying angel: and, though at first it reminded them of that event, yet, afterwards, it probably served to direct their expectations to the great sacrifice for sin by the promised Redeemer. The circumstances and the purport of this remarkable ceremony may be found fully described in the twelfth chapter of Exodus; a chapter replete with the doctrine of Christ crucified. On that memorable night, in which the angel of the Lord slew all the first-born of Egypt, not excepting those of the royal household, he was ordered to spare the families of Israel, which had been directed to exhibit a sign of the redemption by Jesus Christ, by sprinkling the blood of a lamb

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on the posts of their doors. The destroying angel recognized this consecrated token, and *passed over* the house thus marked, without smiting any member of the family it contained. That this was typical of the salvation by Jesus Christ, is evident from the application of it made by the apostle Paul, when he says, "Christ, *our* passover, is sacrificed for us; *therefore* let us keep the feast." The idea of Christ being the great end of that ceremony is so plain, so certain, that the apostle takes no pains, as he does on many other occasions, to establish the point by reasoning; he simply assumes and asserts it as a well-known truth.

Many particulars may be pointed out in the resemblance between the paschal sacrifice and "the Lamb of God:" I proceed to trace the parallel through some of the most remarkable.

(1.) The passover was designed to *commemorate* a great deliverance, that of Israel from the captivity and slavery of Egypt; and it was designed to *prefigure* a deliverance far greater—that of mankind from a tyranny far more abominable, a depression far more miserable; from the captivity of Satan, the slavery of sin, the dread of wrath to come; that the happy subjects of this divine redemption may be placed under the conduct of providence and grace in their passage through the wilderness of this world, until they shall be settled in the land of promise and eternal rest.

(2.) The passover commemorated a deliverance from a destruction otherwise *inevitable:* it was the only appointed means of safety; there was no

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other possibility of escape from the angel of divine wrath. Thus the redemption which is in Christ Jesus is the only refuge of hope set before us,—the only appointed means of escape from that wrath which will come upon all that neglect this great salvation.

(3.) In *both* these cases (it deserves attention) there exists no *natural* relation between the *means* and the *end:* the benefit of the sacrifice is *moral, not physical.* The sprinkling of the blood on the doors of the Israelites had no *intrinsic* efficacy whatever to preserve them: none can suppose any such efficacy therein, as that by which causes produce their effects in the course of *nature.* The Divine Being *appointed* the blood to be the sign and the instrument of the deliverance; and, being thus appointed, it served to arrest the progress of the destroying angel. So it is with the sacrifice of Christ. Between the death of Christ and the expiation of guilt, there was no such relation as that which subsists in nature between secondary causes and their appropriate effects: it was a *moral* relation, resulting from the will and appointment of God, who accepted the death of Christ as a consideration of sufficient dignity to satisfy his justice and vindicate his law. It had no efficacy as a *natural* cause; on the contrary, it left all *natural* causes to operate as before: but it became a *moral* motive with God; an authentic instrument for the sanctification and acceptance of those who are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the

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blood of Jesus." It was a powerful cause in and upon the divine mind, moving Him who moves all things. For the sake of *this* great sacrifice it seemed fit and right, and, in every respect, worthy of Him, "*by* whom and *for* whom are all things," that every penitent believer should be treated as if he had never sinned; that, through *this*, he should be washed, justified, sanctified, and glorified. And there was no more a change of the divine mind in the latter than in the former instance; since the Deity foresaw all that should come to pass. At a distance He contemplated the sacrifice of Christ: He beheld in it the honour of the divine law, the display of the divine purity and justice. This sacrifice, being always present to his contemplation, was the ground on which sins, committed under the first covenant, were pardoned to the penitent; and it is with a reference to the efficacy of this expiation, as reflected back from the cross, that Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

(4.) Again, we may observe the similarity which appears in the *personal qualities* of the two victims. The paschal lamb must be perfect, a male of the first year, without spot or blemish. So Christ, as we have seen, possessed all *moral* perfection; exhibited every virtue, without a single fault or defect. He possessed also, the *physical* perfection of man: he was slain, not when withered by age or decayed by sickness, but "in the flower of his strength, while his breasts were full of milk, and his bones

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of marrow," — when youth was vanishing into mature manhood.

(5.) Observe, further, the slaying of the paschal lamb did not avail, unless its *blood* were *sprinkled.* The blood was shed in order that it might be sprinkled; the sprinkling was necessary to preserve the Israelites. Neither will the blood of Jesus Christ, my brethren, prove of saving efficacy, unless it be *applied.* When wrath shall overwhelm the unbelieving, in the judgement of the last day, it will be of no avail to plead the merit of this great sacrifice, unless we have approached it for ourselves. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the *blood* of Jesus, we must draw near with a heart sprinkled from an evil (or an accusing) conscience." None will be saved from the destruction of that day, though they may have lived in the midst of christian privileges, who cannot say with the apostle— "We are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel." The merit of the Redeemer's blood is infinite, but its efficacy is confined to its application. In his own words, "except ye *eat* my flesh, and *drink* my blood, ye have no life in you." The apostles unite the *name* of Christ with *faith* in his name, as the means they had employed in healing the cripple at the gate of the temple: "His name, through *faith* in his name, hath made this man whole; yea, the *faith* which is by him hath given this man this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

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(6.) As another particular of the parallel, it may be remarked that, while many of the legal sacrifices were offered *by individuals* in their private or public characters, the paschal lamb was required to be slain and offered *by the whole congregation of Israel*; it being understood by all, that he who neglected this important sacrifice would lose its benefit,—would be cut off from the congregation. "Behold," here, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the *world!*"—The blood of animal victims streamed for ages on the Jewish altars, but did not take away sin, even from the Jews themselves: the benefit to be derived from those offerings was chiefly derived by those who looked *beyond* them. Except as shadows of the true Sacrifice for sin, they were to be considered merely as *civil* rites. The voice with which they spoke, could not, in general, be heard "within the veil." The greater part of the Jews were worshippers of the outer court, and rested in their sacrifices as means of external and civil advantages. But, in "the Lamb of God," proclaimed by John, we behold an oblation sufficient for the whole world; a fountain opened for sin, and flowing in all directions; an element of pardon and eternal life, free and extensive as the atmosphere we breathe, which encompasses every portion of the earth's surface. "*He*," says the apostle, "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for *ours* only, but also for the sins of the *whole* world:" "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin."

(7.) In the next place, the *time of slaying the paschal lamb* agreed with the time of our Saviour's

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sacrifice. The sufferings of Christ took place at the feast of the passover; and the very hour of the day appears to have corresponded with that at which the paschal lamb was slain. In the chapter of Exodus before referred to, it is required that the lamb should be killed *in the evening;* or, (as the original signifies, and as it is rendered in the margin of our version,) *between the two evenings;* that is, between the chronological evening and the natural: the one commencing immediately after the sun had passed the meridian, or after twelve at noon; the other, by computation of time, being at six o'clock. Thus the middle hour *between the two evenings* will be at three in the afternoon; the point of time at which our Lord expired on the cross. He was fastened to it "at the sixth hour," which answers to our noon; and, "about the ninth hour," or three in the afternoon, "He cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." Thus, at the moment when the paschal lamb was appointed to be slain, did "the Lamb of God" expire, under the stroke of the divine justice.

(8.) Great objects consecrate all that surrounds them: they impart a portion of their own grandeur to every thing they touch, to every circumstance with which they are connected. It was required that "*not a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken;* it must be sacrificed entire: and this was ordered, that it might the more exactly represent the great Sacrifice. When Christ was crucified, the soldiers (as you remember) finding him already dead, forbore to break his legs, as, according to

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the custom, they had broken the legs of his two fellow-sufferers; and thus, as the historian observes, was fulfilled that which had been written: "a bone of him shall not be broken." This circumstance, though in itself minute, serves to shew that Jesus Christ, as our Sacrifice, was equally the subject of the prediction, and the substance of the type.

(9.) Finally, the paschal lamb was permitted to be prepared as *food*, by no other means than *fire*. What could more appropriately prefigure the agonies of "the Lamb of God,"—who sweat great drops of blood in the garden;—who was parched with thirst on the cross;—who, having submitted himself to endure the indignant justice of the Governor of the universe, experienced the awful truth, that "our God is a consuming fire;" when "His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" and when, in the climax of his anguish, he exclaimed, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He contended, in those moments, with all the storms and billows of the divine wrath; he tasted the penalties of eternal death.

It appears, then, that there was in many particulars a striking resemblance between Jesus Christ and the paschal sacrifice; and the great beauty of the passover arises from this resemblance. How strangely, therefore, are *they* mistaken, who confine their view of "the Lamb of God" to his *example*, and deny the sacrificial and atoning nature of his sufferings. We might ask such persons, *why* was even inanimate nature as it were in

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convulsions at his death? *Why* did the heavens put on sackcloth, and the sun hide his face in darkness? Why were the rocks rent, and the earth shaken? Or, (if this be considered as merely impassioned declamation,) we may demand—*Why* do we meet with such constant and emphatic expressions regarding the blood, the cross, the sacrifice, the death of Jesus Christ? Why should there have been so vast a preparation of legal sacrifices, of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, expressly compared by the apostle (especially in his epistle to the Hebrews) with the death of Jesus Christ?—Why all this, if nothing more was meant by his death, than the completion of his *example*, the *sealing of the truths he taught* with the blood he shed. Supposing *this* to be all that was intended to be understood by such representations, we can only say that the gospel would be the greatest imposition on common sense that ever was presented to the world; it would combine the most pompous pretensions with the most meagre reality, of all existing compositions.

II. We proceed to consider, as the second part of the subject, *the spirit and design of the exclamation* uttered by the Baptist in the text, as it may be understood to express *the claim which Jesus Christ possesses to attention from beings of every order: all* are interested in complying with the summons given in those words, "Behold the Lamb of God."

It appears that the Baptist did *not* principally mean, by this exclamation, to direct the *eyes* of his disciples to the person of Jesus Christ as a *visible* object;—in *that* sense, none could comply with the

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call, except the few who were present in the scenes of his transient ministry: the Baptist desired to command the *attention* of his hearers to the *character and office* of "the Lamb of God." In this sense it is that the term "Behold!" is frequently used in the Scriptures, where no *literal vision* of the object is intended: it is used to denote that the object, *thus* introduced, is deserving of *attention:* as when the angel says, "*Behold,* I bring you good tidings of great joy!" or, when the apostle exclaims, "*Behold* what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" In the text the meaning is similar to that of the *definite pronoun,* as though John had said, "*This* is the Lamb of God:" just as, on another occasion, he said, "*This* is he of whom I spake." The purport of the exclamation, therefore, is, that Jesus Christ, as "the Lamb of God," deserves universal attention; that he is the greatest object of admiring regard, which the universe presents. In illustrating the spirit of the exclamation thus understood, we observe the claim which "the Lamb of God" possesses on the attention of *all mankind.* Mankind are comprehended in two distinct classes,—they are either sinners who remain in their original character; or they are believers, who, though not ceasing from sin altogether, are yet delivered from its dominion. *Here* is an object preeminently worthy the attention of *both* these classes:—

1. And, in the first place, of *all who remain, as sinners, in their original character and state.* In every possible view in which an object can deserve

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regard, "the Lamb of God" claims from all such persons the most earnest attention.

There are three qualities which entitle an object to our regard.

(1.) The first is its own *intrinsic greatness.* On this account the sun, the moon, and the stars, those illustrious splendours of the firmament, have attracted the attention of mankind in every age and nation. But the wonders of the *material* world are merely subordinate to those of the *intelligent and moral universe;* and *here* an object is exhibited, incomparably greater, in the scale of being, than the celestial luminaries. Here we may behold Deity incarnate; God manifested in human nature! Turn aside, and see this great sight; contemplate this object with fixed attention, till your heart is suitably affected by the contemplation: gaze with the eye of faith on this brighter "Morning Star," gaze on this nobler "Sun of Righteousness," till every sublunary object is eclipsed by its superior splendour. Never was Deity revealed in our nature, but in the person of Jesus Christ. He alone could be truly called "Emmanuel, God with us." "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;"—a fulness that deserves the most earnest and persevering research, while it must for ever baffle finite comprehension. *This* is "the great mystery of godliness;" the study of admiring angels; the masterpiece of the manifold wisdom of God; the wonder of the universe.

(2.) A second quality in an object, that excites our attention, and raises it to surprise and

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astonishment, is *novelty*. We esteem a thing the more for being *new:* there is a vivifying influence in the *freshest and rarest* appearances of nature or of mind. But, where will you find another object, worthy to be compared in *novelty*, in entire *originality*, in *singularity* combined with greatness, with the object *here* presented, "the Lamb of God?" Travel in idea through creation,—climb the loftiest heights,—descend to the lowest depths,—take the wings of an angel, and fly to distant worlds; no such Being will be found as He who once tabernacled in the flesh—"the Lamb that was slain," and that is now seated at the right hand of God, as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." Heaven, and the heaven of heavens could not contain him; yet he dwelt, to all appearance, in the body of an infant;—the invisible Creator clothed in human form,—the Ancient of Days cradled as an infant of days,—"He who upholdeth all things sinking under a weight of suffering,—the Lord of life, the Lord of glory, expiring on a cross,—the Light of the world sustaining an awful eclipse,—the Sun of Righteousness immerged in the shadow of death!" Never before was there such a spectacle in earth or heaven. Even inanimate nature seemed to sympathize with his last agonies; heaven itself descended to "behold the Lamb of God:" and well it might; for there was *then* a *greater* prodigy on earth than any which heaven contained. Well might angels "desire to *look* into" the mysteries of man's redemption; and nothing but the most astonishing infatuation

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can prevent us from following such an example. Mankind are accustomed to admire profound philosophers, victorious heroes, or celebrated poets: what are all such objects of admiration, in comparison with this unparalleled phenomenon, which exhibits all the attributes of Deity, adapted to human apprehensions?

(3.) Once more: objects arrest our attention, that *bear a relation to our interest.* Men are interested by that which involves their security from evil, or promises their advancement in prosperity. Objects which are *great* command attention; those which are *new* excite curiosity; but if, in addition to its *greatness* and its *novelty,* an object bears a manifest *relation to our most* important *interests,*—if it involves our defence and safety,—if it forms the pillar of our support,—if it supplies the shield of the soul, the only hope for the guilty, the only comfort for the dying, the only prospect of eternal happiness,—surely, my dear brethren, *such* an object is calculated to awaken in our hearts the most lively affections and desires;—and *such* an object is "the Lamb of God." Not only great and wonderful in *himself,* he bears an essential relation to our most important—to our *eternal* interests. He comes to deliver us from misery, and promote us to happiness. He is competent to satisfy all the secret wants and desires of our nature. "Come unto me," he says, "all ye that are weary; and I will give you rest. I am the Bread of Life: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever; I will raise him up at the last day."

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These are some of *His* words: from whom beside will you hear words like *these*—"*the words of eternal life?*"

Jesus Christ came to save that which was lost: he laid down his life to accomplish our salvation. Nor was there any *waste* of life in that sacrifice: every portion of his infinite energy was requisite to the attainment of such an object; nothing less than the power that upholds all things was adequate to sustain the weight of human sin. He whose almighty influence diffuses itself through the heavens and earth, and preserves all orders of being, He alone endured our punishment; He "trod the winepress alone;" He "looked, and there was none to deliver:" there existed *no other* way of salvation than that which he has opened. *The justice of the Deity, not to be propitiated by any other means, pursues the transgressor on earth and in hell; nothing in the universe can arrest it in its awful career, until it stops in reverence at the cross of Christ!*

As our salvation from the effects of sin is a deliverance from a far worse than Egyptian captivity and misery, so its accomplishment required a far greater exertion of Deity than was required to arrest the billows of the Red Sea. Never did "the mighty God" more fully display the greatness of his power, than when he shewed himself "mighty to *save*, even to the uttermost." He fixed the foundation on which we may build our hope of immortality, and find it to be "a hope that maketh not ashamed," founded on the Rock

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of Ages. He went into the shadow of death, into "the lowest parts of the earth," that he might lay *deep* the *basis of that edifice which was to rise as high as the throne of God!* "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree," that we might become partakers of his own divine nature. *This*, my brethren, is a view of "the Lamb of God," of the *last* importance to be taken by us all. If you *see* him not in this character, you see *nothing* to any valuable purpose. You have taken hold of *nothing*, you have grasped only *shadows*, if you have not taken hold of *Christ*, your *Life*." Flee to him; cleave to him: say of him in the sincerity of your heart, "This is all my salvation and all my desire."

There is only *one* class of beings by whom the object presented in the text is treated with unconcern; for even the legions of hell regard it with a fearful interest:—utterly to "neglect so great salvation" is the peculiar malady of impenitent sinners in the present world. But what infatuation can be compared with this? If there be any *other* door by which you may hope to enter into heaven, avail yourselves of that "door of hope" without delay. If any *other* name be given under heaven in which you may safely trust for the salvation of your soul, place your trust in that favourite name, and leave this Saviour to others; but if there exists *no other* door that can admit us into heaven than that which *He* has opened who says, "I am the door, I am the way, the truth, and the life,"—if *no other* name has been

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given under heaven whereby we may be saved than the name of Jesus Christ,—if *this* is the *only* dispensation of mercy; *then* let us turn our regards from every other refuge, and fix them on *this* alone. "Let all the house of Israel," let all the world, "know assuredly that this *Jesus*, who was crucified, is both Lord and Christ; and they who believe in him are justified from all things." In the land of Israel there were *several* cities of refuge, and the criminal might flee to that which was nearest: but there exists only one for *us;* one "hope set before us, to which we must flee for refuge;" one "Man who is a covert from the storm, a shadow from the heat." In "the Lamb of God" you may obtain present peace: beholding Him, you may die with tranquillity and joy; and rise, through Him, to the mansions of eternal glory. Behold, therefore, ye sinners, ready to perish, "behold the Lamb of God."

How is it possible that *those* can escape "who neglect this great salvation, which at first was spoken by the *Lord, God* himself bearing witness with signs and wonders, the gifts of his own Spirit?" *Not* to behold *such* an object, is "to have eyes, and not to see:" *not* to attend to *such* a call, is "to have ears and not to hear!" Better *not* to have eyes, and see; better *not* to have ears and hear; better *not* to have an understanding, a heart, a sentient nature capable of thought and feeling; better to be numbered with the brutes, or to be a mere plant, or stone, than not to believe this divine report,—than to remain one to whom

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this "arm of the Lord" is not revealed,—than to see in Christ "no beauty that you should desire him," to regard him "as a root in a dry ground," instead of discerning in *such* a Saviour, "the *power of God*, the *wisdom of God!*"

2. But there is a second class of persons among mankind—*those who have repented and believed:* "the Lamb of God" has an equal claim to the continued and earnest regard of his believing followers.

Some benefits we receive in such a manner that any farther attention to their cause is unnecessary; no motive but gratitude requires us to think of them again: they are complete, whether or not we recur to their origin. This is not the case with the benefits conferred by Jesus Christ. Beside the claim of *gratitude*, which ought to outlast the immediate operation of benefits received,—(for we should think it unnatural in a son to forget his parents as soon as they were in the grave,)—*here* we are dependent on our Benefactor for a *continuity* of blessings. It is not enough to have regarded him at first as the only Source of pardon and salvation: he is as necessary to us from day to day as when we *first* believed in him. He is not a Saviour whom we may forget, having once for all received his benefits: he is the Source of continual energy through the whole of our career. The Bread of Life can no more be dispensed with in the *spiritual* life than in the *natural:* in respect to the one, as well as to the other, we must say, "Give us this day our daily," or, as the original

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word signifies, our *essential* "bread!" "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" We must apply for perpetual repetitions of our Saviour's pardoning grace, and justifying merit, corresponding with our perpetual transgressions and deficiencies. The spiritual life of a christian can only be maintained in its vigour by a ceaseless emanation from Jesus Christ. "The life which I *now* live," says the apostle Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God: it is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me." In other words, he was continually "beholding the Lamb of God." Every christian partakes of his experience, and to the end of his life feels the same need of Christ,—of his example, his doctrine, and especially of his atonement,—which he felt at first, when he fled alarmed and distressed to the foot of the cross. When the rock was smitten in Horeb, the water continued to flow through the wilderness for the constant supply of the Israelites; and they drank of that water daily until they reached the promised Canaan. "That rock was Christ;" and thus we must daily drink of the spiritual streams that flow from Him. We must look unto Him, and we shall then be *lightened, and our faces not ashamed.* When our Saviour, in his great condescension and humility, washed the feet of his disciples, Peter at first refused, saying, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." On this, our Saviour replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." "Lord," said Peter, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. "This our Lord declined, observing, "He

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that is washed, needeth not save to wash his *feet;* and now ye are clean." This implies, in the spiritual application which it was probably designed to receive, that, after having bathed at our first repentance in the fountain of that blood which "cleanseth from all sin," we must still repair to the same for constant purification from those innumerable defilements which, by our frailty, we cannot but contract in our walk through the present world. Even the clean require to be again and again purified. The sins of a single day would be sufficient to condemn us: weighed in the balance, we should be found wanting. The believer never subsists on an independent source of his own—he lives by *faith:* faith is not the reservoir, but the habitual receiver. He is continually directing his eye toward *Him* in whom it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and that out of that fulness we all should receive even grace for grace; grace in the streams, corresponding with grace in the fountain. Let us live more by faith in Christ; "the just shall live by faith:" it is the safest and the happiest life. On every occasion of infirmity and distress, let us renew our application to that Saviour who said, in answer to the complaint of his apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is perfect in thy weakness." "Most gladly, therefore," adds the encouraged apostle, "will I glory even in my infirmities, that the *power of Christ* may rest upon me." The moment we forget our dependence on Christ, and are puffed up with a conceit of our own merit or strength,

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we are in danger of falling into the snares of Satan.

3. Having dwelt the longer on the more direct and obvious application of the doctrine taught by John the Baptist in the text, to the two classes of mankind, as either impenitent sinners, or justified believers, we may *extend* the exclamation, in the third place, to the *redeemed in the world of glory.* From *them,* no less than from their brethren on earth, "the Lamb of God" claims the highest degree of admiring regard. He retains this appellation, as we learn from the last book of Scripture, in his present exalted state; and it is remarkable that the name which expresses his humiliation to the death of the cross, is selected as the name under which he is adored in the world of glory: "I beheld," says John, "and lo, a multitude, which no man could number, gathered from all nations, stood before the throne and before the *Lamb:* and they cried, with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the *Lamb,* for ever and ever!" It is strange that any should be found, who, calling themselves christians, refuse to pay Jesus Christ that worship here on *earth,* which he is represented in these passages as receiving in *heaven!* Such persons, if they are admitted into heaven, will have indeed to learn a *new song,* for they must learn a *new religion!* But *you,* my dear brethren, "have not *so* learned Christ:" you know that the Redeemer holds the most distinguished

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place in the world of glory; he sits at the right hand of God; he is the centre of the glory that shall be revealed; his presence constitutes to the redeemed the principal *charm* of heaven. It was his own desire "that those whom the Father had given him may *be with him where he is*, and may there *behold his glory*." It is only in him that the Deity is visible: "No man hath seen God, nor can see; he dwells in light which no man can approach: the only-begotten Son has declared him." Deity requires to be shaded and softened, by putting on the veil of our nature, before it can be suited to our feeble perception: the glory of the Lord must shine in the face of Jesus Christ. We read concerning the redeemed inhabitants of heaven, that "they hunger no more, nor thirst any more; because the *Lamb*, who is in the midst of the throne, feeds them with the bread of life, and leads them to fountains of living water:" a description which implies that Jesus Christ is himself the source of celestial beatitude.

4. But, in the fourth place, there is yet another order of beings to whom "the Lamb of God" presents an object of peculiar attention and profound admiration. *The holy angels*,—that innumerable company of spirits who "excel in strength,"—are represented as deeply interested in the service and glory of the Redeemer. From its infancy, they watched with anxiety the fortunes of the rising church. They announced the birth of Christ with exulting strains; they ministered to Christ in the scenes of his temptation, his agony, and his burial;

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they cheered his apostles with the first tidings of his resurrection, "He is not here, he is risen." Even after his ascension, they still lingered with a compassionate concern among his sorrowing disciples, and assured them of his final return: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall come again in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And in that day of his final return, "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory," there shall be "all the holy angels with him." Accordingly, among the glories which accompany the manifestation of God in the flesh, the apostle enumerates this,—that "He was *seen of angels:*" and he represents the Father as introducing the Son into the world with this proclamation, "Let all the angels of God worship him." It is not improbable that those glorious beings are themselves, in some respect, involved in the blessings of that stupendous plan, by which "things in heaven" are gathered together in one centre with "things on earth." Angels may probably be *secured* in that felicity, to which saints are *promoted,* by the mediation of Jesus Christ: and certainly the former are described as taking part with the latter in the songs of praise to *the Lamb.* "I heard," says John, "the voice of many angels round about the throne, and their number was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

5. Finally, there is a Being of another order, a Being infinitely exalted above any of those already

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mentioned, whose attention is deeply engaged by the object presented in the text:—*God himself* is concerned, supremely concerned, in the contemplation of "the Lamb of God." To *Him* the Redeemer is an object, not indeed of *admiration*, since the Divine Being can admire nothing, but of infinite *complacency* and *satisfaction*. On two conspicuous occasions in the ministry of Jesus Christ,—at his baptism and at his transfiguration,—did the Eternal Father proclaim, by a voice from heaven, "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: *hear Him!*" In every part of revelation we find the Son of God represented by the Father as the object of his dearest, his most intense interest. "Behold," says he, "my servant whom I have chosen! mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth take counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed; He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn: then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion:* be wise, therefore, ye kings; *kiss the Son*, lest he be angry, and ye perish!" In the opening of the epistle to the Hebrews, we read that "God hath appointed his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, the heir of all things;" and that, "to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: and Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the

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work of thy hands: they shall perish, but *thou* remainest!" It seems as if the *divine mind were concentrated*—as if *all the Deity were busied and intent*—in the scene of redemption and the person of the Redeemer! It seems as if the Great Eternal could find no *other* medium in which he might pour out the whole treasury of his perfections,—satisfy his infinite conceptions and desires, display and harmonize all his various attributes—his holiness, his justice, his mercy, and his love,—than Jesus Christ, "the power and the wisdom of God!" Here he shines in his complete and blended glory,—at once the "just God," and the justifying Saviour of him that believeth in Jesus Christ. Here, doubtless, is presented an object the most glorious and delightful in the universe of God! There is reason to believe that, in a *moral* (that is, in the *highest*) point of view, the Redeemer, in the depth of his humiliation, was a *greater* object of attention and approbation, in the eye of his Father, than when he sat in his *original* glory at God's right hand; the one being his *natural*, the other peculiarly his *moral* elevation.

Encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses—summoned by so many powerful voices—let us all more earnestly than ever attend to this incomparable object: so shall we be prepared for the trials of life, the agonies of death, the solemnities of the judgement, and the felicities of the eternal world; so shall we *inherit* the unsearchable *treasures of grace and glory.*

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XIV.

THE ADVANTAGES OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT, CONTRASTED WITH THE BLESSINGS OF THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST.*

[PREACHED AT BRIDGE-STREET MEETING, BRISTOL, SEPTEMBER, 1822, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.]

2 SAM. vii. 16, 17.—*Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.*

THESE words, you are aware, are part of the message which the Lord addressed to David by the mouth of Nathan, at the time when David meditated the raising of a temple to the Lord. He was not indeed permitted to execute that design, but the Lord accepted him "according to all that was in his *heart*;" and commissioned the prophet Nathan to assure him, that his throne and kingdom should be confirmed, without interruption or termination, to his lineal successors, without ever again suffering such an instance of the *departure* of divine favour as that which had occurred in the removal of the family of Saul from the throne: "*Thy* throne shall be established for ever." This promise was verified to the successors of David in so extraordinary a manner, as compels us to regard their history as an

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

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example of the particular intention and interposition of God's providence. The direct line of succession was preserved unbroken (with a single exception, that of Athaliah,* which was of short continuance,) in the house of David; and, while the history of the kings of *Israel* (after the separation of the ten tribes under Rehoboam's reign) becomes a subject of some perplexity by perpetual irregularities in the succession, it is remarkable that the kings of *Judah* succeed each other in perfect order, during a period of five hundred years. It is true, that during a long interval,—from the captivity to the incarnation of our blessed Lord,—the throne of Judah, as well as that of Israel, fell into a state of deep decline and depression, so that the traces of its history are almost extinct: yet, still the house of David *existed,* it was still *preserved* and *known;*—the kingdom was in a state of *abeyance*—of *suspended,* not *abolished,* exercise: and it was *resumed and renewed,* and improved into higher glories, in the person of *Jesus Christ;*—the true, spiritual, substantial *David;* of *whose* kingdom (it cannot reasonably be doubted by any) that of David himself was at once a *type* and a *part.* The empire of Christ was the *sequel* and *consummation* of that which had originated in the son of Jesse;—and hence our Saviour is so often styled the *Son* of *David.* The angel at his nativity announced him as "He who should be great, and should sit upon the throne of his father David, and of whose kingdom there should be no end;" while the evangelists, for the same reason, take pains to

* 2. Kings, chap. xi.

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convince us that he descended from David by an exact *genealogy*. The *perpetuity*, so emphatically promised in the text and many other places, to the kingdom of *David*, immediately pointed to the everlasting reign of Messiah, to which alone that attribute could strictly belong.—Our Saviour inherited this empire, *not* in *consequence* of his essential *divinity*, but of his *incarnation* and his *mediatorial* undertaking. His *divinity*, of which I trust all present are deeply convinced, was a *requisite* indeed, but it was not (properly speaking) the *cause* of his receiving and exercising this spiritual dominion. *Unless* he had been a Person of the most Holy Trinity, it is evident he could not have sustained a sovereignty which requires universal knowledge and power: but his *Deity* could not have been the *reason* of his sustaining it; or else the *Father* and the *Holy Spirit*, being each *Divine*, must have inherited this throne as well as the *Son of God*. If *all* power was committed to him, it was (as he declares) because he was the Son of *Man*.—Like the *typical* David, He approached and ascended to his throne, through much difficulty and suffering; he had to combat and conquer many and malicious enemies: though, during his ministry on earth, he gathered about him a *few* friends and followers,—(as David had also done, amidst the persecutions of Saul,)—it was not until he had *risen* from the grave, and was ready to ascend to heaven, that he could use that triumphant language, "*All* power is given unto *Me* in heaven and in earth!" The *commencement* of his reign may be dated from his

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resurrection, or from his *session* at the Father's right hand: it was *then* the Father said, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Ever since that era, he has *continued* and *advanced* his empire; and (as the apostle observes), He must go on reigning until "he hath put all enemies under his feet."

In the following remarks, let me request your candid attention—*first*, to the principal *advantages* to be expected in a well-ordered government *on earth*; and, *then*, to the *corresponding*, and infinitely more important advantages, which may be enjoyed under the *spiritual* government of Jesus Christ.

1. The first and primary advantage expected from every well-constituted human government is *security*, and the *sense* of security. The depravity of our nature has introduced such a universal selfishness and rapacity among mankind in their *natural* state, that men in every age and country have been convinced of the expediency and necessity of attempting to *organise some* form of government for the purpose of their common security. While every individual is left to exert his own power as he chooses, none can be secure either in his property or person: it becomes absolutely indispensable, therefore, if men would escape the *intolerable* evils of such a state, to collect and embody this scattered and uncertain force of the many, in some *public depositary* of power: such a provision is *necessary* for the protection and preservation of every community. Hence almost *all* nations, even

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the most uncivilized, have attempted *some* constitution of this kind, however rude, for the prevention or the redress of those injuries to which the subjects were continually liable by the passions of our nature. Where the supreme power is lodged in the person of *one*, the government is called a *monarchy;* where it is reposed in the hands of a *few*, an *aristocracy;* and where the *people* share it in common among themselves, it becomes a *democracy*. Whatever may be the imperfections attaching to each of these *modes* of government, the *worst* is preferable to a state of society *destitute* of public authority and law: in *such* a state, there can exist not only no *security*, but no *tranquillity;* it must be a state of perpetual apprehension and terror, in which none would feel themselves free to pursue either the arts of life or the acquisitions of trade. Even when an individual might *himself* escape for a time the assaults of rapacity, in such a state he would have to endure (what would be perhaps to some a still *greater* evil) the fearful *expectation* of his turn to suffer; and the *nearer* he beheld the acts of outrage, the deeper must be the impression of alarm on his mind,—just as (if a humble illustration may be excused) when a stone is thrown into water, while the agitation is greatest at the spot where it falls, the *effect* extends in the circles that are formed around, though it becomes more and more faint as they recede farther from the *centre*.

But the utmost degree of personal *security* that can be enjoyed under any form of civil power, is a most imperfect *shadow* of the *safety* which Jesus

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Christ bestows upon the subjects of his *spiritual* reign. Until a man submits to *His* mediatorial authority, he remains exposed to unutterable evils. He *ought* to feel perpetual anxiety and alarm; for, in the declared judgement of God, he is in a state of *condemnation* and *death*:—"he that believeth not in the *Son* of God, is condemned *already*;" he that is not "quickened together with Christ Jesus" is "*dead* in trespasses and sins:" he is a criminal under sentence of execution, and only *respited* for a brief and uncertain period; the sword of divine justice, suspended over him, may fall at any moment, and he *is lost* for ever. This is *certainly* the condition of every unconverted sinner,—every one that has not yielded himself a willing subject to Jesus Christ his *Lord*. But "kiss the Son;" yield yourself as such a subject to *Him*; and, from that moment, you are placed in a state of perfect *security*; you are *saved with a great salvation*,—protected from the *wrath* of God, from the *dread* of eternity, from the *misery* of sin; according to the prophet's beautiful description of our Saviour—"In that day a King shall reign in righteousness; and a Man shall be as a covert from the storm, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The subjects of Jesus Christ, justified by faith, have *peace* with God. The *last* donation he promised his disciples was peace:—"Peace I leave with you; *my* peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." "*My* peace!"—the same peace which filled the bosom of the *eternal* Son of God, when, having finished his work, he was acknowledged by the

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Father as his "beloved Son in whom he was well pleased." For, "because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of *His* Son into *your* hearts,"—of His Son, the first-born of many *brethren*. And (as the apostle argues) "if *God* be for us, who shall be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall *God* that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? *Christ* that *died*, yea, rather that is *risen* for us? Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?"—The *church* of Christ, as a collective society, is invested with absolute security; it is a city on whose walls is engraven the name "JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, THE LORD IS THERE!" it stands fast "like Mount Sion that *cannot be moved*:" it is founded on a *Rock*, and that Rock is Christ: He has "all power in heaven and earth" for its preservation;—and not "the gates of hell shall prevail against it." But a *portion* of this general security of the *body* belongs to every *member* of it: *every* believer in Christ enjoys the same; and, as he grows in grace and knowledge, he enjoys also the *sense* of this security; he *feels* himself at peace with God; this peace *keeps* and fortifies his heart and mind against every assailing trouble; and, on the most *trying* occasions, he learns to say with humble confidence, "I will go forth in the *strength* of the Lord."

2. The second benefit expected from human governments is *liberty*. So far as this advantage is consistent with the former, or with the public *security*, the *more* largely it is enjoyed the *better*.

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Every *diminution* of liberty, except such as is necessary to our *protection* from evils which might otherwise be apprehended, is itself just so much redundant *evil*. All *wanton*, all merely *arbitrary* restrictions, upon the freedom of individuals, are to be regarded as some of the greatest calamities which mankind can sustain from each other; inasmuch as they strike directly at those principles of free thought and action which are the sources of all noble enterprise, energy, and excellence. Restraint, that cannot be justified by the production of some *greater* benefit than could be attained without it, is not imperfection; it is injustice. But, suppose the utmost possible degree of *civil* liberty enjoyed, what is it in comparison with that *spiritual, real* freedom, which Jesus Christ confers? The former is, at the best, only an *external*, circumstantial blessing; it does not enter into the *inner man*. But "if the *Son* shall make you free, you shall be *free indeed*:" "where the Spirit of the Lord is," *there* is the only true liberty. The Christian is the genuine *free-man*, and none beside is such except in *name*. *His* indeed is a glorious liberty: from the moment he enters into the kingdom of grace and truth, he is loosed out of prison, and leaves his bonds behind; invigorated with a divine strength, he *purposes*, and it *stands fast; he triumphs over himself;* he is victorious over the *world* with all its allurements or afflictions; he tramples upon the greatest *tyrants*,—the *powers* of darkness, the *rulers* of the disobedient; from that moment he is emancipated from the spirit of bondage; he walks at liberty; he can

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look beyond the grave; humble and yet *confident*, prostrate and yet *not confounded*, even in the prospect of appearing before *God;* and, having overcome all, he "sits down in heavenly places with Jesus Christ,"—even as *He* also, having overcome all by death, sat down in glory at the right hand of his Father. *This* is a *perfect* liberty: not an evil can be felt or feared, but it may be thus removed. *This* is an *immortal, everlasting* liberty;—a freedom which confers on its possessors the sublime title of "the *sons* and *daughters* of the Lord God Almighty."

3. The next advantage derived from a good government is *plenty*. To secure *this* advantage, you are aware that there are arrangements in *nature*, in a great measure independent of *human* institutions, and beyond the control of human policy. But perhaps, in this respect, there has been often much error on the part of those in power. In general it may be asserted that *human* laws should not interfere *too much:* no set of men can be supposed to understand the interests of particular classes *as well* as the individuals concerned understand their own interests. Every one should be left at liberty, as far as possible, to choose *his own way* in pursuing his own prosperity; and the aggregate prosperity of the nation will be best consulted by allowing the utmost scope to that of every *individual.* The prevailing tendency in every government is, to legislate too much: and here, it may just be remarked, there are two obvious evils to be avoided; —those who legislate should be careful, in the first

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place, not to lay on too many *impositions*; and, secondly, not to introduce any unnecessary *restrictions*. The utmost that human wisdom can achieve must be imperfect: under the best system of government, there must remain many cases of poverty and distress; but in the kingdom of Jesus Christ there exists an *infinite plenty* of all the provisions that can be desired for all the wants of the *soul*. *None* are neglected here: the *poorest* may be enriched beyond the most splendid opulence of this world, even with "the *unsearchable* riches of Christ;" as the apostles, "though *poor*, could *make many rich*,—though they *had nothing*, they *possessed all things*." For in Jesus Christ "*all* fulness" dwells, for the supply of spiritual destitution. "Fulness" of *knowledge*: knowledge is the great distinction of the mind,—and here is all *spiritual* knowledge. Christ is himself the *wisdom* of God; to know *Him* is to attain at once the highest knowledge; it is to have the spirit which "searcheth all things, even the *deep* things of God," and ultimately to "*know even as we are known*." "Fulness" of *holiness*: holiness is the proper riches and beauty of the soul; and the *subjects* of Christ are created anew in holiness after *His* image. "Fulness" of *consolation*: the greatest comforts that ever visited the troubled heart of man, are those which flow from Christ as their fountain; it is *He* who has brought to light consolations entirely *new*, such as had never before entered into the *thoughts* of men; and well might he say, "*Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in* ME." "Fulness," once more, as it respects

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the *inheritance* in reserve;—"*an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;*" of which the saints have at certain seasons a *present* sense and foretaste, though the light of eternity is required to display its real *extent*,—to display the *accessible* fulness of the *present* Saviour. *These* are *durable* treasures: they can never be taken away from us,—they form part of *ourselves*,—they are carried about with us where we go; no moth corrupts, no thief invades. There can exist no distinction here between the rich and the poor; no room for the frown of pride, or luxurious excess on the *one* side, while we behold despised poverty and pining want on the *other:* all is *equality* and *unity*, the consequence of unlimited *abundance*,—abundance commensurate with all the demands of a perishing universe.

4. A tendency to *improvement* in *its social institutions*, is a fourth benefit which ought to accompany every well-ordered government. The best of those institutions are such as will be at once *permanent* and *progressive*, by their intrinsic wisdom and excellence,—by their adaptation to all the varying circumstances of the nation,—by their power of providing for unseen and possible emergencies: they will gradually rise from *security* to convenience, and then exalt convenience into ornament—into just refinement and diffused illumination: such has been the aim of the greatest legislators. Under the scorching climate of *despotism* all the fruits of the mind are withered; a dull monotony prevails in the moral scene; the powers of men, unable to expand,

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attain only a dwarfish growth: while in a *free* state, where liberty of thought is allowed to all, the faculties and virtues have room for exercise,—they flourish as in a climate congenial with their nature; and such, on the whole, is eminently the condition of this favoured and distinguished country.

But the difference between the most moral and the most flagitious of *natural* characters, is *less* than the difference that subsists between the subjects of *Jesus Christ*, and the children of *this* world; because the latter is the difference between the spiritually *dead* and *living*. "The wisdom of *God*" is discovered to those only who *believe* in *Jesus Christ; all others* sit *in darkness:* for, "*after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*" We see this verified in all the history of nations. Without pretending to determine how far human reason may proceed *alone*, it may be safely affirmed that the *least instructed* portion of every country in which christianity is professed, possess far juster views of the leading truths of religion,—such as the character of *God*, the nature of *sin*, the obligation of *virtue*, the *eternal* world,—than ever were entertained by the most inquiring pagans. The great *abstractions* of the gospel were never *touched* by *man*,—they remained *shut up in the bosom of Deity;* and there they must have remained for ever, had not *He* disclosed them by Jesus Christ, *the Light of the world.* They surpass the natural mind in its widest excursions, its profoundest researches, its sublimest

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elevations. Yet *these* are the *vital essential* principles of the soul,—these are the germs of all excellence and happiness,—*these*, wherever they are known, are found to have a purifying and an exalting influence upon mankind,—*these* effectually tend to *moralize* and *beautify* society. The gospel empire possesses in itself *interminable* energies, and *tendencies* to benefit its subjects. No *other* reason can be *assigned* why our *country* and Europe should differ so greatly from the ancient nations, and should so far excel the most cultivated among them, regarded in a moral estimate; no other reason than this, that the *light of Jesus Christ* has shone upon us like a finer Sun—*the "Sun of Righteousness."* All those elysian images of prophecy, which paint with so much beauty the latter days of the world, are nothing, in their substantial fulfilment, but the *impress* of Jesus Christ on the minds and manners of mankind, the image of Christianity embodied in society, *"the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord,"* and *righteousness* dwelling in the new-created universe.

5. The fifth and last requisite of a well-constituted government is *stability:* this is the crown of all its other advantages. Nothing can be wanting to *such* a reign but that it should *last;* and this is what the text emphatically expresses,—*"Thy throne shall be established for ever:"* as the Psalmist says of the Messiah, *"He shall reign as long as the sun and moon endure."* In this the kingdom of David was an emblem, however faint, of that which would be erected by Jesus Christ; wonderfully preserved as was the throne of Judah, while the

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greatest monarchies were marked by perpetual vicissitudes: the kings of Israel were ever changing in their *line*, while the descendants of David *maintained a direct* succession. No Roman emperor, with the exception of Vespasian, was followed by his *proper* successor, during a hundred and fifty years from the time of Julius Cæsar: they passed and chased one another like *shadows*. *Here*, meanwhile, "in the house of Judah," was a *preternatural* stability, destined as an image (though an imperfect image) of the *fixed*, indestructible empire, of *Jesus Christ*. *His* throne has never been shaken for a moment; He has appeared without *a rival in the field*. Who has ever dared to question His pretensions? *who* has dared to challenge a comparison with *Him* in *prophecies*, in *miracles*, in *virtues*, in *doctrines*? Not a doubt has been entertained among competent judges, of *his* being the *true* Messiah: all the servants of God have been ready, in reference to His dominion, to adopt the well-known exclamation of an excellent man, "*Esto perpetua!*"* Of *His* kingdom let there be no end. We may truly say, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the world stand up, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord and his Messiah; but *He* shall break their bonds asunder, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." There has appeared on earth no other *universal interest* than this;—none which has bound all hearts together as the heart of one man. In minor points

* The last words of Paul Sarpi, expressive of his wish for the immortal glory of his country, to whose cause he died a martyr.

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we may follow a thousand different paths; but when the question is, whether JESUS CHRIST shall reign,—whether the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST shall be extended,—we are ready to *forget* all our distinctions,—we are all *united*,—we are all *one* man. Not that the stability of His kingdom depends merely on *human* exertions: *God* has staked his character and all his perfections upon its establishment; He has pledged his word and oath for its *success*:—"The jealousy of the Lord of Hosts will *do* this, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Nothing but the extension of this empire is necessary to change the wilderness into a *paradise*, and exalt the condition of *earth* into a resemblance of *heaven*. And we have reason to hope the destined period is *not* remote: our children's children may live to witness the cessation of wars under the sceptre of the Prince of Peace;—to witness the *expectation of eternity and heaven* diffused among all the partakers of our nature. Lend your helping hand to the promotion of such an object. Convert *base* riches, "the mammon of unrighteousness," into the means of imparting *spiritual* treasure, the instrument of conveying "an exceeding and eternal *weight* of glory,"—into a link, an important link, in the chain that connects earth with heaven. You are not called out to endure the burden and heat of the day; you are permitted, while sitting under your vine and fig-tree, to assist, in a way at once *easy* and *effectual*, the diffusion of the privileges and immunities of this heavenly kingdom over the whole world; the recovery of a vast neglected

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portion of our race to the happy condition of those who are the subjects of Jesus Christ.

XV.

THE ENLARGEMENT OF CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.*

[PREACHED FOR THE BAPTIST MISSION, AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, AUGUST 6, 1824.]

2 COR. vi. 13.—*Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.*

THE Corinthian church was early infested by false teachers, who opposed themselves to the apostle Paul, and, forming their own sects and factions, endeavoured to substitute their corruptions of the faith for his pure and divine doctrine. To the cure of this disease he had addressed himself in a former, and he pursued the same design in this epistle. In doing this, he found himself compelled, though the humblest of men, to remind the Corinthians of the extraordinary evidences he had given of the most devoted zeal in the cause of Christ, while he adverted to his manifold sacrifices and exertions. In the context he speaks in the affectionate language of a parent appealing to his children: "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

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open to you, our heart is enlarged: ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged." Endeavour (as if he said) to *meet* me upon the same ground of affectionate attachment, on which I desire to embrace you in Christ. In discoursing on these words, I propose, for our mutual advantage, first, to *illustrate* in what this enlargement consists, and, secondly, to *enforce* it.

I. With respect to the first point,—in what the enlargement mentioned in the text consists,—let it be remarked, first, that it is *not* to be understood as consisting in expansion of *intellect,* in that kind of mental enlargement which arises from the discoveries of science and philosophy: for this, however ornamental, or however useful it may be, is by no means necessarily connected with a divine influence on the heart. Nothing can be more familiar to our knowledge or observation, than the melancholy instances of those in whose character extreme deficiencies and blemishes of a *moral* kind form a striking contrast to brilliancy of intellect. It is sufficient, in illustration, to remind you of the examples which have been so abundantly furnished by a neighbouring kingdom. Probably, there may exist some *remote tendency* in intellectual enlargement, to expand the *heart* in benevolent sensibility; but the connexion is not so close, nor the effect so certain, as to justify any great dependence; and those who infer from the improvement of reason a proportionate

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advancement in virtue, will find their expectation too often frustrated.

There are others who flatter themselves that they possess superior enlargement of soul to most around them, because they entertain an equal indifference to all the vanities of human opinion in religious subjects, and feel no regard for any sect or creed. This would, no doubt, be a very cheap and easy doctrine to embrace: by those who are indifferent, concessions are *easily* made to almost any extent; and there can be no great liberality in sacrificing truth, where no real attachment to truth is felt. In the apostle Paul we find the *reverse* of such a character: exactly in proportion as he became attached and devoted to "the truth as it is in Jesus," he exhibited the increase of his real benevolence and self-denying exertions. Genuine enlargement of charity consists in *seeking* the salvation of men,—not in complimenting them with a pretended candour. Nothing can be really more cruel, however varnished with a gloss of liberality, than the attempt to explain away the most clear and awful sanctions of divine truth, when we are expressly assured, "he that believeth, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be *damned!*" True spiritual wisdom is shewn,—not in such a promiscuous confusion of all parts of truth, but in proportioning our regard for every part to its own importance and magnitude.

On the *positive* side of the subject: the christian enlargement recommended consists in a real

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benevolence to the *whole* church of Christ, as opposed to any selfish views of *our own* salvation, or of *our own* church, as exclusively concerned. The nearer we approximate to universal love, the higher we ascend in the scale of christian excellence. There are some, though we would hope the number is small, who live solely to *themselves;* who are so perfectly absorbed in selfishness as to neglect all around them; who regard whatever does not conduce to their own immediate gain or pleasure as so much loss:—the proper sentiment we should entertain toward the spirit these exemplify, is that of *supreme contempt.*

Others limit their benevolence to the circle of their own family, or of their acquaintance: these rise above the former in proportion as they possess more of the enlargement we would illustrate; they mingle their affections with *others,* and identify their happiness with that of those who are most nearly connected with themselves.

Others advance far beyond this: they extend their benevolent interest over a much *wider* circle; they feel for every case of distress, and rejoice in every opportunity of benefit that falls within their view. Their emotions are of the *same kind* with the former, but, taking an ampler range, they proportionably raise the moral character.

But suppose the *whole nation* to be embraced by an individual; suppose him, forgetful of all merely personal or private interests, to devote himself entirely to the public benefit of his country: he holds the scales of justice,—he allays discord,

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alleviates the wretchedness of want, exposes his very *life* in the service of the state; and in every respect acts under the impression of his forming only a *part* of the *whole*. Here is a far higher order of character; and the reason is, that it has more of the true enlargement recommended by the apostle. And this is the utmost extent of human benevolence, apart from the divine religion of Jesus Christ. The proud Roman confined all his benevolence to the city of Rome, and regarded the remoter provinces merely as subservient to the wealth and splendour of that enormous capital; while all the world, beyond the limits of the empire, was despised as a mass of despicable *barbarism*. To view the world as one united *whole*,—mankind as one family, all nations as *one blood*,—springing from *one* Father of all, tending to *one* destiny,—this enlargement of heart, however just and natural, never entered into the views, or at least never regulated the conduct, of the most enlightened men in the pagan world.

But suppose us enabled to open our eyes to a comprehensive view of mankind as one vast family; suppose the Divine Being to have clearly discovered himself as the Universal Father, of whom all are alike the children by *nature*, and from whom all have alike departed by *sin*: suppose him to have shewn us that all are in the same *lapsed* condition, and that one great method of recovery has been provided for all; that there is one immense society of holy beings, whether men or angels, to which we are all invited by the gospel:

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what should be the effect of such a revelation, but first to attach us to *God* as our common centre, and then to the whole family of man as called to form the *church of God?*—for, in such a view, we come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the saints,—to God the Judge of all,—to Jesus Christ the mediator between God and man!

II. In the second place, I proceed to *enforce* this spirit of christian enlargement, by reminding you of some of its *motives and reasons.*

1. First, this spirit is perfectly *reasonable* and in harmony with *nature;*—with nature, that is, as the production of God, though not as transformed by *sin.* This enlargement of soul is one of the great lines of demarcation between *man* and the inferior creation—this property of his mind, by which he is capable of considering himself as part of the *whole,*—capable of abstracting and generalizing his ideas, and of forming a conception of contributing to the *moral system.* The more pious, the more truly enlightened men become, the more they feel and cherish this most important sentiment, this *moral abstraction and expansion.* Again, we are evidently so circumstanced in the present world, that we are perpetually and inevitably *led out of ourselves:* it is impossible to lay down any practicable system of conduct which would insulate us from our species, and confine us to *ourselves* entirely. There are several natural emotions of the mind that are purely social and benevolent: such is the sentiment of *pity* or

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compassion, which it is impossible to explain on any other supposition. Pity *identifies* us with others: those who have attempted to resolve it into a *selfish* pleasure as its origin, forget that this pleasure itself must be traced to a *previous* concern for distress as its cause. It is absurd to suppose we must *first* feel the pleasure, and *then* exercise the pity; this is to mistake the effect for the cause, and to leave no *basis* for the emotion. In all our *social* affections, supposing them *genuine* and not merely *pretended,* we act on the ground of a *disinterested* benevolence; we make our happiness out of that of *others;* it is *their* happiness, not *our own,* that we primarily seek.

2. Further: this enlargement agrees with the genius of christianity,—of *that* divine system under which we profess to be forming our character. For what is christianity? It is to *believe* in the redemption of the world by *Christ* the Son of God. This is the simplest view of revelation; but *this* is the grand display of the *divine* benevolence: "*Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son a ransom for us.*" "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,*" &c. It is this *fact* to which your attention is directed; the *fact* alone is stated: those who are not moved by such a fact as this, no conceptions of thought, no eloquence of words, nothing that can be added, can reach their hearts! Such a gift of *God*—such a condescension of *Christ*—speaks *for itself,* or none can speak for it. Hence the apostle declares, "*The love of Christ constrains*

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us," bears us along with itself in the *same* direction, impels us towards the *same objects, identifies* us with the love of Christ to sinners, and the glory of God in their salvation. Such an example of compassionate benevolence,—of *enlargement* in heart,—once perceived and felt, absorbs the soul. In the spectacle of "God manifested in the flesh," the greatest extremes and contrarieties are united; majesty and meanness the most distant; the highest excellence and the lowest degradation! And the natural effect is to *assimilate* our hearts; the first fruit of the Spirit of Christ on his apostles was *union.* The earliest disciples began at once to organize themselves into a *body,* all standing fast in one fellowship, all minding the same thing, all drinking of the same Spirit: they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to each other; they loved one another as *brethren* in Christ Jesus.

In the communion of the saints, such as *theirs,* the rich blessings of the gospel are most deeply enjoyed. At first the apostles, not sufficiently illuminated, retained some remains of their exclusive prejudices, some lingering of that selfishness which is the old plague and epidemical malady of human nature. They aimed at narrowing and monopolizing the gospel within the circle of Jewish proselytes. But, as the Sun of Righteousness rose with increasing brightness upon their minds, they purged off their prejudices, and came early to a perfect compliance with the injunction—"*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:*" they understood and proclaimed that there was "*neither*

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Greek, nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free." And the same spirit is realised in proportion as men are christianized: they live "*kindly affectioned one toward another; forbearing and forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven themselves:*" they *feel* that "*none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself.*" The most eminent saints have been shining examples of this: Moses prayed that he might be *blotted* out of God's book, rather than all the people. The apostle Paul, perhaps, above the whole apostolic college, exhibited the love of his Master imparted to his mind: he could even wish himself *accursed for the sake of his brethren;* he sympathized with every member of the christian body: "*Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?*" &c.; "*beside that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*"

3. This enlarged benevolence may be farther enforced by its *aspect on our own happiness.* This, indeed, is a secondary motive,—secondary to the glory of God, the ultimate end of all things, and to the precepts of Christ, the authoritative rule of conduct. We are not to seek our own happiness in any other way than that which is consistent with these: but here it may be truly said, "He that *loves* his life shall lose it, and he that *loses* his life for the gospel shall find it." The more we *embody* ourselves and our happiness with the interest of *others,*—the interests of the *whole,* the more in reality we consult our own happiness. In the pursuit of any merely *solitary* schemes, we

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shall reap only disappointment: if we attempt to *detach* ourselves from the general mass, to *individualize* ourselves from the community of our species, we shall be *imprisoned* and *pent in*. When the barriers of selfishness are broken down, and the current of benevolence is suffered to flow generously abroad, and circulate far and near around, then we are in a capacity of the greatest and best enjoyment. Happiness must be sought, not so much in a direct as in an indirect way,—the way which has been marked by God and by Jesus Christ. In order to be happy in any high degree, we must *abandon ourselves*, according to his will, and after the pattern of his Son, to the temporal and spiritual benefit of mankind. The apostle was a bright illustration of this: he laid himself out in body and soul,—he spent and was spent for others: filled with the most enlarged views of the glory of God as displayed in the salvation of men,—ravished with the ineffable beauty of redemption,—he was ready to do and suffer all things that might be required in the promotion of such an end; and the prisoner at Philippi and Rome was infinitely happier than Nero on the throne.

Some may suppose an exception must be made in favour of the private exercises of *devotion*. Devotional pleasures may be enjoyed, perhaps, in the highest degree, in retirement; but we may err in extremes even here: we must not be *epicures* even in devotion. It is possible to be so intent upon meditative duties, as to go out of the appointed

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path of social usefulness, as it stands embodied in the character of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Would you escape the corrosions of domestic affliction, beware of concentring your affections within too confined a circle of beloved objects, lest, like Micah, when deprived of his images of worship, you be constrained to cry, "*Ye have taken away my gods.*" Be assured, my brethren, the more you diffuse and multiply yourselves upon a wide surface of benevolence, the better you will be guarded against the afflictions and bereavements of life. The Christian, whose heart is enlarged in love to his brethren, sows a soil that cannot but yield him an abundant produce.

4. Lastly, this expanded benevolence is intimately connected with the *promotion of all public good.* It would be trifling with your attention to shew that its influence on our *usefulness* is yet more *direct* than that which it exerts on our *happiness.* There is nothing on which the present age may be more justly congratulated than its attention to public good. In the duties of *private* devotion, in abstinence, and deadness to the world, our ancestors have often greatly exceeded us: but, from various causes, they manifested much *less* of this enlarged christian benevolence; they pursued salvation too much as an insulated and a selfish concern. Great care was taken to explain the most vital principles of religion,—to lay well the foundations of the sinner's peace with God,—to build up the believer in all the highest views of Christ and holiness: but a zealous activity in the

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diffusion of christianity was reserved to be the distinguishing feature of our own generation of the church. It is wonderful to reflect that three hundred years have passed since the protestant reformation, and yet that the establishment of *missions* is, comparatively, an affair of *yesterday*;—that now, for the first time, christians appear to feel the force of the command, "*Go ye into all the world.*" Hence our multitude of sabbath and national schools;—hence the Bible circulated by thousands and by millions;—hence the consecrated use of our commercial and naval advantages, to waft to the most retired and unknown corners of the earth, treasures of immensely greater value than any which had ever before been carried abroad, even "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

In conclusion, permit me briefly to suggest to you two or three important modes of attaining this christian enlargement of heart:—

1. In order to its attainment, you must, in the first place, cultivate an acquaintance with God: "*Acquaint thyself with God.*" First, draw near to the *Father*, in that new and living way which he has opened to your approach by the sacrifice of his beloved Son: then will this spirit of benevolence, like an elastic fluid, circulate from your heart to every human being; for "*whoso loveth him that begot, will also love all those that are begotten.*" Once *taste* for yourself that the Lord is gracious, and then go abroad, and, like the apostles, you will find that you "*cannot but speak of what you have seen and heard:*" or like the woman of Samaria,

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you will call upon others, "*Come, and see a man who hath told me all things that ever I did; is not this the* CHRIST?" Begin *here:* the acts and exercises of benevolence will prove the natural emanations of this holy fountain.

2. In order to attain this principle, and to improve it, we must exercise ourselves in *prayer* for the Holy Spirit's influence. Spiritual influence from above is the true element of our sanctification; and by *this* alone can our hearts be truly enlarged in love to man. The ointment which Christ received was the *Holy Spirit;* and that sacred unction must descend to the skirts of his clothing—must be diffused among all his followers: then christians will follow *his* example, who preached the gospel to the *poor,* gave light to the blind, and liberty to the captives; healed the broken-hearted, and proclaimed to all around the redemption of our God.

3. Thirdly, and finally, if you would cultivate an enlarged spirit of love, connect yourself *with great objects* of beneficence. The mind takes a tincture from the objects it pursues. If you engage your attention in the concerns of christian philanthropy, your mind will be dilated in proportion to your ardour—in the ratio of cause and effect. The way of extensive benevolence is now opened and prepared by God; and it is become as much the duty of every christian to assist foreign *missions,* as to assist the christian *ministry* at home. From us, as from the ancient Zion, must the word of the Lord go forth: the waters of the sanctuary must be diffused by our exertions, until, rising by

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degrees, they overspread all lands. The only question with every one should be, What can *I* do in the support of this great cause? How can I touch and quicken the springs and movements of that vast machinery which is now in such extended operation? It is a day in which the voice of Providence to all is, "*Come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.*" The powers of darkness are awake and zealous: Satan seeks to excite his agents to new activity, "*in great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.*" *Our* duty is to oppose his machinations with the only antagonist force,—to set up the kingdom of Christ against him. This has already been attempted with great success. Missionaries have gone forth (Dr. Carey in particular) in the true spirit of martyrs at the stake: they have deliberately and joyfully gone forth from their country and their home into a perpetual and voluntary exile. *You,* my brethren, are called to *no* such sacrifices: how different the circumstances in which *you* may fulfil this part of your christian vocation!—*you* have only to sit still, draw from your private store, and distribute a portion of that superfluity with which Providence has blessed you; and thus, while you remain at home, you may touch the wheels of the machine which produces such incalculable good. It is a happy circumstance of the age in which we live, that even filthy lucre may thus be transformed into a mean of the most extensive spiritual beneficence. And what equal use can you make of your substance? When life is hastening to its close, the

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world itself must pass away, with all that it contains; and *true converts* to christianity are the only portion of its inhabitants, that shall emerge from its ruins, and enter into "*the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;*"—the only portion that shall be gathered together in an eternal and blessed society around the throne of God and of the *Lamb.* The divisions and distinctions of christians vanish away before such a prospect. The spirit of *missions,* indeed, has proverbially contributed to *harmonize* the church of Christ; and to give signs of the approach of that bright æra, when the names of sect or party shall no more be heard, but all shall form "*one fold under one Shepherd.*"—Finally, remember that you are expected to act as stewards of the manifold gifts of God; that *neutrality* in a cause like this is peculiarly detestable. Remember who has said, "*He that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad;*" while He has declared, as an immutable axiom, that "*it is more blessed to give than to receive.*" Remember the apostle's solemn charge, that you "*trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;* that you *do good, and be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life.*"

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XVI.

MARKS OF LOVE TO GOD.*

[PREACHED AT BRIDGE-STREET, BRISTOL, SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1824.]

JOHN v. 42.—*But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*

THE persons whom our Lord addressed in these words made a high profession of religion, valued themselves upon their peculiar opportunities of knowing the true God and his will, and proclaimed themselves as the *Israel* and the *temple* of the Lord, while they despised the surrounding pagans as those who were strangers to the divine law. Yet the self-complacent Pharisees of our Saviour's age were as far from the love of God, he assures them in the text, as any of those who had never heard of his name. In this respect, *many of "the first were last, and the last first."* The rejection of the gospel evinces a hardness of heart which is *decisive* against the character; and, in the case of the Pharisees, it gave ample evidence that they possessed no love of God. Had they really known *God,* as our Lord argues, they would have known *himself* to be sent by God: whereas, in proving the bitter enemies of *Christ,* they proved that they were in a state of enmity against God. By parity

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield. These Notes present a valuable example of that species of Mr. Hall's preaching, in which, throughout the sermon, he kept pressing the application upon the consciences and hearts of his hearers.

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of reason, *we*, my brethren, who know God and his word in the way of christian profession, ought *not* to take it for granted that we possess the love of God, and are in the way of eternal life: the same self-delusion may overtake *us* also; and similar admonitions may be no less necessary to many present, than to the Pharisees of old. Suffer then, my brethren, the word of exhortation, while I invite each individual seriously to consider this subject, with a view to the discovery of his real character.

In proceeding to lay down certain *marks* of grace, let it be premised, that either these marks partake of the *nature* of true religion, or they do *not*. If they *do*, they must be *identified* with it, and here the mark is the *thing*: if they do *not* partake of its nature, some of them may exist as indications where genuine religion is not. It is necessary, then, that we combine a *variety* of particular *signs* of grace: any *one* taken by itself, may, or may *not*, exist, *without* true religion; but where *many* are combined, no just doubt can remain.

Whether you have the love of God in your soul, presents a most *critical* subject of inquiry; since the love of God will be acknowledged by all to be the great, the essential, principle of true religion. The simple question, then, to which I would call your attention, is this,—"Am I, or am I not, a sincere lover of the Author of my being?"

In endeavouring to assist you in the decision of this momentous question, as it respects yourselves,

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I. I shall entreat your attention while I suggest a variety of *marks* which indicate love to God; and,

II. Supposing the conviction produced by the statement to be, that you have *not* the love of God, I shall point out the proper *improvement* of such a conviction.

1. In suggesting various marks by which you may ascertain whether you love God, or not, I would mention, first, the *general* bent and turn of your *thoughts*, when not under the immediate control of *circumstances*; for *these*, you are aware, give a new and peculiar bias to our thoughts, and stamp them with an impress of their own. There is an infinite variety of thoughts continually passing through the mind of every individual: of these, some are thrown up by *occasions*; but others, and often the greater part, follow the *habitual train* of our associations. It is not to thoughts of the *former* kind that I refer; it is to those of the latter class,—those *voluntary* thoughts which spring up of *themselves* in the mind of every person: it is *these*, not the former, that afford clear indication of the *general temper and disposition*. The question I would propose to you is, What is the bent of your thoughts, when, disengaged from the influence of any particular occurrence, you are left *to yourselves*, in the intervals of retirement and tranquillity, in the silence of the midnight watches, and, in short, whenever your mind is left free to its own spontaneous musings? Are the thoughts most familiar to your mind, at

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such times, thoughts of God and the things of God;—or, are they thoughts that turn upon the present world and its transient concerns? Are they confined, for the most part, within the narrow circle of time and sense; or, do they make frequent and large excursions into the spiritual and eternal world? The answer to *this* question will go far to decide whether you have, or have *not*, the love of God. It is impossible that such an object as the Divine Being should be absent long from your thoughts; impossible that *his* remembrance should long remain *merged* in the stream of other imaginations; unless you are supposed chargeable with a *decided indifference* to divine things! Unless you are destitute of love to God, you can never be so utterly uncongenial in sentiment and feeling with the Psalmist, when he says, "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, while I meditate upon thee in the night watches:" "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" When that man of God gazed upon the starry heavens, his mind was not merely engaged with astonishment at the *physical energy* there displayed; he was still more deeply lost in grateful admiration of the mercy of Providence as manifested to *man;*—a sinful child of dust, and yet visited by God in the midst of so magnificent a universe! But when day passes after day, and night after night, without any serious thoughts of God, it is plain that He is not the *home* of your mind, not your *portion, centre,* and *resting-place:* and, if this is the case, it is equally plain that you are not in a state of acceptance

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with Him; since nothing can be more certain than that, *as* our thoughts are, *such* must be our *character*. I do not ask what are your thoughts at particular *times*, or under the effect of some particular *event*: there may be little difference, on *some* occasions, between those who remember, and those who neglect God, *habitually*. The charge against the ungodly is, that "God is not in *all* their thoughts." If there are any here who feel this charge as bearing against *themselves*, let them take that solemn warning given by himself at the close of the fiftieth Psalm: "Oh consider this, ye that *forget* God, lest I *tear* you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you!"

2. Let me request you to consider seriously how you stand disposed to the *exercises of religion*. If God is the object of your love, you will gladly avail yourselves of the most favourable opportunities of cultivating a closer friendship with the Father of your spirits: on the contrary, he who feels no regard for these opportunities, proves that he has no love to God, and will never be able to establish the conviction that God is his friend. Wherever there exists a sincere friendship, opportunities of cultivating it are gladly embraced, and the opposite privations are regretted. Where an *habitual neglect* of sacred exercises prevails, it must be interpreted as if it said, like those whom the prophet describes, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from amongst us. Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways!" If your closets seldom witness your private devotions,

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if your moments in retirement are languid and uninteresting,—your religion can have no hold on your heart; and the reason why your religion has no hold on your heart, is because you have no love of God. There are some whose religion sits easy and delightful upon them; its acts and functions are free and lively: there are others who seem to bear their religion as a burthen, to drag their duties as a *chain*—as *no vital part of themselves*, but rather a cumbrous *appendage*: this is a decisive and melancholy symptom of a heart alienated from God. There is no genuine religion, no real *contact* of the heart with the best of beings, unless it makes us continually resort to Him as our *chief joy*. The Psalmist is always expressing his fervent desires after God; after the light of the divine countenance, and the sense of the divine favour: but do you *suppose* such desires *peculiar* to the state of believers under the *Old* Testament? *No*, my brethren; there exist more abundant reasons than ever, since the gospel of Christ has been displayed in all the glorious fulness of its blessings, why our souls should be inflamed with such feelings as those which inspired the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God!"

3. If you would ascertain whether you love God, consider how you stand affected toward the *word* of God. We can entertain no just thoughts of God, but such as we derive from his own word: we can acquire no true knowledge of God, nor

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cherish any suitable affections towards him, unless they are such as his own revelation authorises. Otherwise we must suppose that revelation insufficient for its specific purposes, and set the *means* against the *end*. All, therefore, who sincerely love God, are *students* of his word; they here, also, accord in soul with the Psalmist, and, like him, can say, "O how I *love* thy word! in it is my meditation all the day:" they *eat* it as food for their souls, and find it *sweeter than honey*. They go to it as to an inexhaustible fountain, and drink from it streams of sacred light and joy. A neglected Bible is too unambiguous a sign of an unsanctified heart; since that blessed book cannot fail to attract every one that loves its Divine Author. How is it possible to delight in God, and yet neglect *that* word which alone reveals him in his true and glorious character,—alone discovers the way by which he comes into unison with us, and condescends to pardon us, to love us, and to guide us through all this mysterious state of being? It is observable, that the *only* persons who are inattentive to their own sacred books, are to be found among *christians*. *Mahomedans* commit large portions of the Koran to memory; the *Jews* regard the Old Testament with reverence; the *Hindoo bramins* are enthusiastically attached to their Shaster; while *christians* alone neglect their Bible. And the reason is, that the *Scriptures* are so much more spiritual than the religious books received by others: they afford so little scope for mere amusement or self-complacency;—they place the

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reader *alone with God*,—they withdraw him from the things that are seen and temporal, and fix him among the things that are unseen and eternal,—they disclose to his view at once the secret evils of his own condition, and the awful purity of *that* Being with whom he has to do. No wonder the *ungodly* man hates their light, neither comes to their light, but retires from it farther and farther into the *shades* of guilty ignorance. How melancholy the infatuation of such a character!

4. Estimate your character in respect to your love of God, by reflecting with what sentiments you regard the *people* of God. God has a people peculiarly his own: they are *not* of that world to which they outwardly belong,—not conformed to it in the spirit of their mind; they stand apart, many of them at least, in conspicuous conformity to Jesus Christ, and earnest expectation of the glory which He has promised. How, then do you regard these decided followers of God? Do you shun their society with aversion and secret shame; or do you enjoy their communion as one of the most delightful among your christian privileges? Are you content merely to be the companion of those who "have a *name* to live, but are dead;" or can you say with the Psalmist, "My delight is in the excellent of the earth?" or, with the beloved disciple, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?" for, as he adds, "He that loveth him that begot, loveth him that is begotten:" if you do not love the *image* which you have *seen*, how can you

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love the *unseen* original? If the features of holiness and grace in the *creature* are not attractive to your view, how can your affections rise to the perfect *essence?* How can you ascend to the very *Sun* itself, when you cannot enjoy even the faint *reflection* of its glory? He who knew the *heart,* could alone say to those around him, "I *know you,* that ye have not the love of God in you:" but though none can address you now in the same tone of divine authority, yet you may hear it uttered by a voice within—the voice of your own conscience: you may know, without any perturbations of hope or fear, by the spiritual insensibility and inaction of your soul,—by *this* you may know, with equal certainty as by a voice from heaven, that *you have not the love of God in you!*

5. Consider the disposition you entertain toward the person and office of the *Son of God.* "If ye had loved the Father, ye would have loved me also," was the constant argument of Jesus Christ to those Pharisees whom he addresses in the text. For Jesus Christ is the express *image* of God: the effulgence of the divine character is attempered in *him,* to suit the view of sinful humanity. In the life of Jesus Christ, we see how the Divine Being *conducts himself* in human form and in our own circumstances: we behold how he bears all the sorrows, and passes through all the temptations, of flesh and blood. Such, indeed, is the identity, so perfect the *oneness* of character, between the *man Christ Jesus* and the *Divine* Being,—that our Saviour expressly assures us, "He that hath seen

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me, hath seen the *Father*; I and my Father are *one*." The purpose for which God was manifested in the flesh was, *not* to reveal high speculations concerning the nature of the Deity: it was to *bear* our sorrows, and to *die* for our sins. But can *you* contemplate Him, thus stooping to your condition, thus *mingling* with every interest of *your own*, and not be *moved* by such a spectacle?—not be *attracted*, *fixed*, filled with grateful astonishment and devotion,—crucified, as it were, on the cross of Christ, to the flesh, and to the world? What mark, then, of our possessing no love of *God* can equal this, that we are without love to *Jesus Christ*?—that neither the *visibility* of his divine excellence, nor his *participation* of all our human sufferings, can reach our hearts, and command our affections?

6. In examining whether you love God, examine how you are affected by his *benefits*. *These* are so numerous and so distinguished, that they ought to excite our most ardent gratitude: night and day they are experienced by us; they pervade every moment of our being. We know that favours from an *enemy* derive a *taint* from the hands through which they are received, and excite alienation rather than attachment: but the kindness of a *friend*, by constantly reminding us of himself, endears that friend more and more to our hearts; and thus, he that has no love to God receives all his favours without the least attraction toward their Author, whom he regards rather as his enemy than his friend. But the christian feels his love of God excited by every fresh instance of

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his goodness. The mercies of God have accompanied you through every stage of your journey; and they are exhibited to you in his word as stretching through a vast eternity. Are *these* the *only* benefits you can receive without gratitude, and suffer to pass unregarded? *How,* then, can any love of God dwell in your bosom?

7. Consider, in the next place, in what manner you are impressed by the sense of your *sins.* The question is *not* whether you *have* any sins,—none can admit a doubt on this point; the *only* inquiry is, *how* you are affected by those sins? Are they remembered by you with a sentiment of *tender regret,* of *deep confusion and humiliation,* that you should ever have *so* requited such infinite goodness? And is this sentiment combined with a *sacred resolution to go and sin no more,*—to *devote* yourself to the service of your Divine Benefactor? If you can live without an habitual sense of penitential tenderness and reverential fear, be assured you cannot love God; you have no experience of those scripture declarations—"*They shall* FEAR *the Lord and his goodness in the latter days:*" "*There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be* FEARED:" you know not yet that "*the goodness of God leadeth to repentance.*" If the mind is softened by the love of God, all his favours serve to inflame its gratitude, and confirm its devotion to his will: but he who has no love of God in his soul, thinks of nothing but how he may *escape* from God's hand, and selfishly devours all his favours without an emotion of gratitude to the Giver.

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8. Finally, let me remind you to consider how you are affected to the *present world.* If you could only be exempt from its afflictions, would you wish it to be your *lasting* home? If you could surround yourself with all its advantages and enjoyments, would you be content to dwell in it for ever? Yet you *know* that it is a place of separation and exile from the Divine Majesty;—that it is a scene of darkness, in comparison with heaven, very faintly illuminated with the beams of his distant glory;—that its inhabitant is constrained to say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but mine eye hath *not* yet *seen* thee;" while *heaven* is the proper dwelling-place of God and his people! Could you then consent to remain here always, without ever *seeing as you are seen,—seeing light in his light,*—without ever *beholding his glory;* without ever drinking at the fountain, and basking in *that presence which is fulness of joy, and life for evermore!* always to remain *immersed* in the shadows of time —entombed in its corruptible possessions!—*never* to ascend up on high to God and Christ and the glories of the eternal world! If such is the state of your spirit, you want the essential principle of a christian,—you want the love of God. The genuine christian, the lover of God, is certain to feel himself a "*stranger on the earth.*" No splendour, no emolument of this world,—not all the fascinations of sensual pleasure,—can detain his heart below the skies, or keep him from sympathizing with the sentiment of the Psalmist: "*As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; and when I*

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awake in thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." I do not ask whether you have, at present, "*a desire to depart:*" perhaps you may not be as yet sufficiently prepared and established to entertain so exalted a desire; but still, if you have received a *new* heart, you will deprecate nothing so much as having your portion in *this* life,—as having your eternal abode on *earth.* It is the character of faith to dwell much in eternity: the apostle says, in the name of all real believers, "*We look not at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.*"

II. And now, my brethren, supposing the preceding remarks to have produced in any of you the conviction *that you have not the love of God in you,* permit me very briefly to point out the proper *improvement* of such a conviction.

1. First, it should be accompanied with deep *humiliation.* If you laboured under the privation of some bodily organ, requisite to the discharge of an animal function, you would feel it as in some degree a humiliating circumstance; but what would be any defect of this kind, however serious, in comparison with that *great want* under which you labour—the want of piety, the calamity of *a soul estranged from the love of God!* What are all other subjects of humiliation, compared with *this*—a *moral fall,* a *spiritual death in sin:* and this, unless it be removed, the sure precursor of the *second death—eternal ruin!* "*This is a lamentation indeed, and it shall be for a lamentation.*"

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Suppose the children of a family, reared and provided for by the most affectionate of parents, to rise up in rebellion against their father, and cast off all the feelings of filial tenderness and respect; would any qualities those children might possess, any *appearances* of virtue they might exhibit in other respects, compensate for such an unnatural, such an awful deformity of character? Transfer this representation to your conduct in relation to God: "If I," says he, "am a *father*, where is my fear? if I am a *master*, where is my honour?" "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me: the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

2. And let your humiliation be accompanied with *concern and alarm.* To be alienated from the Great Origin of being; to be severed, or to sever yourself, from the essential Author and element of all felicity, must be a calamity which none can understand, an infinite woe which none can measure or conceive! If the stream is cut off from the fountain, it soon ceases to flow, and its waters are dissipated in the air: and if the soul is cut off from *God*, it *dies!* Its *vital contact* with God,—its spiritual *union* with the Father of Spirits through the blessed Mediator, is the only life and beauty of the immortal soul. All, without this, are *dead*—"*dead in trespasses and sins!*" A living death—a state of restless wanderings, and unsatisfied desires! What a condition theirs! And, oh! what

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a *prospect* for such, when they look beyond this world! *Who* will give them a welcome when they enter an eternal state? What reception will they meet with, and where? What consolation amidst their loss and their sufferings, but that of the fellow-sufferers plunged in the same abyss of ruin? Impenitent sinners are *allied* to evil spirits; they have an *affinity* with the kingdom of darkness; and, when they die, they are emphatically said to "*go to* THEIR OWN *place!*"

3. This is an *awful* state for any to be in at present; but, blessed be God, it is not yet a *hopeless* situation. Let no person say, "I find by what I have heard, that I do not love God, and, therefore, I can entertain no hope." There is a way of return and recovery open to all. Jesus Christ, my dear brethren, proclaims to you all, "I am the way. No man can come to the Father but by me:"—but every one that will may come by this new and living way; and, if you lose life eternal, you lose it because,—according to his words just before the text,—because "you *will* not come to Christ that you may have life." If you feel the misery, deformity, and danger of your state, then listen to his invitation, and embrace his promise. See the whole weight of your guilt transferred to his cross! See how God can be at once the just and the justifier! Take of the blood of sprinkling, and be at peace! *His blood cleanseth from all sin:* He will send *that* Spirit into your heart, which will manifest him to you; and where that Spirit is, *there* is *liberty* and holy love. *He* is the *mystical*

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ladder, let down from heaven to earth, on which angels are continually ascending and descending, in token of an alliance established between God and man. United by faith to Jesus Christ, you shall become *a habitation of God through the Spirit:* the Father will make you a partaker of his *love,* the Son of his *grace,* angels of their *friendship;* and you shall be preserved, and progressively sanctified; until, by the last change, all remains of the grand epidemic source of evils shall be for ever removed from your soul; and the *love of God shall constitute your eternal felicity.*

XVII.

THE JOY OF ANGELS OVER A REPENTING SINNER.*

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST, 22, 1824.]

LUKE XV. 7.—*I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.*

THE ministry of our Lord was exercised, and his success obtained, principally among the lower classes of mankind. We read that, in opposition to the supercilious contempt of the Pharisees and rulers, "the common people heard him gladly;" the ancient prediction being thus verified, that,

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"to the poor the gospel should be preached." Accordingly, Jesus Christ, adapting the style of his preaching to the state of his hearers, borrowed many familiar illustrations of the truths he taught from the scenes of nature and from the occupations of ordinary life, and generally used the parabolic mode of instruction: yet his illustrations were always delivered in a manner consistent with the dignity of his doctrine and character, and they tended to shew that his religion is perfectly adapted to make all mankind wise unto salvation.

The proud Pharisees took offence at this attention of our Saviour to the common people, and urged it as an objection against him that he received sinners and ate with them. Our Saviour replied to their objection by supposing the case of a shepherd who, if he had lost a single sheep of his flock, would immediately leave all the rest that he might recover that *one;* and, having recovered it, would feel a greater degree of satisfaction than the possession of all the rest could bestow. After this comparison, our Lord descended to another yet more humble, which could have occurred to no person that was not more conversant with cottages than courts; the comparison of the poor woman that, on the recovery of one lost piece of silver, would be filled with a joy which she could not forbear inviting her neighbours to participate. From these familiar images Jesus Christ lifts our imagination at once to heaven itself; assuring us that, in a similar manner, "*Joy shall be in heaven, joy among the angels of God, over one sinner that*

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repenteth," and this a "*greater joy than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.*"

In endeavouring to unfold this passage for our mutual advantage, I propose to consider, briefly, the four following subjects of inquiry; first, where we are to look for these ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance; secondly, why the event of one sinner's repentance should fill the angels with joy; thirdly, why this joy should be greater than that with which they contemplate so large a number of righteous persons; and, fourthly, why the seat of this should be placed in heaven; after which, in the last place, I shall conclude with a brief improvement.

1. The first point of inquiry is, Where are we to find these ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance? The forerunner of Jesus Christ came preaching the doctrine of repentance; and Jesus Christ himself repeated that doctrine, saying to all, *Except ye repent, ye shall perish.* When he sent forth his apostles, he taught them to circulate, wherever they went, the solemn admonition, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is come unto you.* They constantly inculcated repentance as universally necessary: *Now,* said they, *God commandeth all men every where to repent.* Yet the text makes mention of ninety-nine persons who *need no* repentance. Where then are we to find these? Two solutions have been proposed; each in itself appears satisfactory, but each must be taken separately: proceeding on different grounds, they are not capable of being combined.

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First, the persons concerned have been supposed to be persons who have already repented. Divines are accustomed to divide all persons into three states of character,—as careless sinners, awakened penitents, or confirmed believers. The persons in question, who need no repentance, are supposed to have passed through the two former of these states of character, and to be now in the third: they are neither careless sinners, nor penitents newly awakened to a sense of guilt—they are confirmed believers; and they need no repentance, no entire change of their hearts, simply because they have already experienced it: as the apostle exhorts the Hebrews, they *go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance.* It is not intended to convey an idea that they have not daily sins to call for daily penitence, but merely that, having once been effectually convinced of sin, and converted to God by a true repentance, they may justly be said not to need that change any more. There is nothing unnatural or improper in this interpretation: there are many such persons, it is to be hoped, in every christian society; many who, having passed through that mysterious and vital process of divine influence on the soul, which we call repentance, cannot, strictly speaking, experience or require it a second time.

The other solution is, that Jesus Christ is here speaking hypothetically; that he makes a supposition, which has no existence in reality, merely for the sake of argument. No doubt many instances of such suppositions occur in the discourses

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of our Saviour. It is a mode of statement which exactly concurs with another part of the parables contained in the same chapter: I refer to the character of the elder son. Is there any individual to be found, either in the christian profession, or in civil life, who exhibits the archetype of that elder son?—any one to whom the Father could with propriety say, "Son, thou hast been always with me, and all that I have is thine?" I am aware that the conduct of the Pharisees has been generally considered to be represented by that of the elder son: this is true; yet it is evident the Pharisees are here represented not such as they really were, but such as they vainly imagined themselves to be. In strict reality, nothing could be more unlike than the original and the picture: our Saviour gave them credit for their pretensions to righteousness; but nothing could be more remote from the real character of those, before whom even *the publicans and harlots* would enter into the kingdom of heaven. After the same manner of speaking, it has been supposed, Jesus Christ here introduces the idea of ninety-nine righteous persons: no real persons were designed by the expression; he used it merely for the purpose of assailing the arrogant conclusions of the Pharisees respecting themselves: supposing them to be of such a faultless character, still, argues our Lord, the spectacle of one penitent sinner would inspire greater joy in the hearts of heavenly beings than the spectacle of ninety-nine such persons.

2. The second inquiry is, Why this spectacle

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should have such an effect on heavenly beings, and particularly on angels? One might have thought it more probable that no event on earth, at least none in which one individual alone was concerned, would have any effect on beings of so elevated an order; that such an occurrence would not even be known in the celestial court; still less that it would occasion an increase of joy in those abodes of eternal blessedness. But revelation has withdrawn the veil from the invisible world, and opened a communication between earth and heaven. It exhibits to us a race of holy and glorious beings denominated angels; and these are represented as instruments employed in executing the divine purposes respecting man; they are Christ's angels; they take a deep concern in the success of his church, and the gathering in of his redeemed: *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation?* In one passage, indeed, though somewhat obscure, the apostle Paul seems to insinuate that angels are invisibly present in the solemn assemblies of the faithful.* Though their interference in the affairs of the church is now silent and unperceived, there is no reason to suppose it to be withdrawn, or less real than when it used to be accompanied with the splendour of miraculous circumstances; any more than there is reason to believe those infernal spirits, against whose temptations we are so often warned, to be now no longer awake and active against us. Heavenly beings are witnesses of

* 1 Cor. xi. 10.

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these assemblies; they listen to the ministry of sacred truth; they anxiously trace its effects on the consciences and hearts of men; and, whenever a salutary impression is produced, whenever the conscience is convinced, and the heart opened to repentance, they bear the glad tidings to their companions in felicity, and *then is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* Do you ask, why they are thus rejoiced by such an event? For the same reasons, I reply, that the most pious among men are accustomed to rejoice when they hear of the conversion of a sinner to God. Such a change brings, they are sensible, a new servant to their Lord; it is the accession of a new member to that great society of which God and his Christ are the head: and none can be a real, loyal subject of the King of kings without wishing his laws to be obeyed, his kingdom to be extended; because the glory of the Redeemer is realised in the multitude of the redeemed. Besides which, the benevolence of angels is proportioned to their elevation in wisdom and holiness: they approximate, far nearer than the most exalted of the saints, to the unlimited benevolence of the divine character. God is love, and angels are emanations of that Divine Spirit: no taint of selfishness mingles with their feelings and their views: they see distinctly the connexion that subsists between repentance and happiness: they see that when the sinner repents, he first *comes to himself*—he takes the first step in that progress which tends toward their own ineffable felicity—he enters on that way in which

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God is to be found: while impenitence endangers the eternal welfare of the soul, threatens its forfeiture of immortal happiness, its subjection to irreparable misery. It cannot be but that the repentance of a sinner, regarded as it is by angels as the birth-day of a new existence, the precursor of immortality, the embryo of endless bliss, the introduction to the element of perfect peace and rest, the vestibule of heaven,—it cannot but be that this should communicate delight to those holy and benevolent spirits.

The Scriptures clearly reveal to us, whether or not you believe the doctrine, that there exist in this world two great kingdoms; at the head of one of which kingdoms is Jesus Christ, at the head of the other, Satan; and that all mankind, without exception, are the subjects either of the one or the other of these mighty opposite empires. Now, repentance is the line of demarcation betwixt the two; it is that which marks the confines of light and darkness,—of the heavenly and the infernal state. From the moment a sinner repents, he makes a transition from death to life, spiritual and eternal: from that moment Satan loses a vassal, and Jesus Christ gains a servant. It is impossible for beings such as angels to remain indifferent spectators of such an event; impossible for them not to feel joy when they see the balance changed in favour of their own cause. Victory and gain, in every instance, are attended with feelings of joy; but no spoil can be deemed precious, no deliverance worthy of triumph and exultation, in comparison

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with that which is achieved when repentance finds place in the heart of a human being!

3. In the third place, it is natural to ask, Why the joy entertained by angels, on occasion of a single penitent's recovery, should be greater than the joy they derive from the spectacle of ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance? It must be confessed that the amount of good enjoyed by the ninety-nine righteous persons, is intrinsically greater than that which can be supposed to be enjoyed by a single penitent. Theirs, besides its being diffused among ninety-nine persons, is a confirmed and advanced state of happiness; whereas his is merely the first commencement, the embryo of happiness, and this merely in one individual. *How* then, it may be asked, can the degree of joy excited in the breasts of angels by the repentance of a single sinner, be justly represented as greater than that which is excited by the view of ninety-nine persons who continue to enjoy a state of far more established and exalted felicity? In answer to this, let it be observed, that, in all probability, it is the prerogative of the Deity alone to be affected by things according to their real, absolute magnitude and importance, without the smallest regard to the circumstance of time, without receiving any deeper impression from an occurrence because it is of recent date; it is probable that it is only in His infinite intellect that all things appear in their essential nature, without the difference of impression which arises to our minds from an event

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being more or less distant in respect to time: "a thousand years are as one day, and one day is as a thousand years, with the Lord;" *His* mind being omnipresent in immensity, and grasping all things as in a point. But beings whose perceptions are progressive, as the perceptions of all finite beings must be, are necessarily more powerfully influenced by a recent event than by one that has long past; for a time it occupies and engrosses their whole attention, and swells upon their view far beyond its natural dimensions. Now, angels are finite beings; they are affected as such, in their sensations, by the proximity and distance of objects; and, if they are thus affected in their sensations, they must be similarly influenced in their sympathies, since proportionate sympathies always follow sensations.

The penitent sinner has entered upon a new existence,—he has commenced an entirely new course of feeling, thought, and action; and he is yet, when he ceases to be a penitent, to pass into a new and more advanced character of one who delights in God. Angels are affected, like ourselves, by the extraordinary and astonishing change that has taken place. They behold one who has made an eternal transition from death unto life—one who has turned his back on the kingdom of darkness for ever, and set his face toward the light of God; who has begun his march from the land of his captivity toward the heavenly Canaan; who has chosen God for his portion, Christ for his Lord, saints and angels for his friends and society;

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who is *come to mount Sion, the city of the living God,* to their own society and that of the redeemed—to the presence of God! He has obtained a new mind, a new heart; which, instead of being *a nest of vipers, a cage of unclean birds,* is become *a temple of the Holy Spirit,* filled with divine inspirations and acceptable devotions! Can we wonder that such a change should deeply affect the highest order of finite minds, and cause the angels of God to exclaim with rapture, *This, our brother, was dead and is alive; he was lost, and is found?* If all are unrighteous,—if all are by nature dead in sin and condemnation,—if there is no escape without repentance,—then repentance must be of all things the most essential to a sinner: and such it is expressly declared by Him who said, *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish!*

But why, you ask, is the joy greater for the repentance of one sinner than for the perseverance of ninety-nine saints? The ninety-nine righteous persons only stand where they stood before; they only go on in the same path of life in which they had long walked; the only change they can experience is an accretion, an augmentation of the principles and blessings in which they were already confirmed; there is no abrupt and surprising revolution, no essential change: but the first conversion of a sinner to God is an event never to be forgotten; it is an æra in eternity, it is registered in heaven!

4. The fourth and last point of inquiry is, the reason why Christ places the scene of this joy in

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heaven. The repentance of a sinner is a subject of joy on earth; of joy to the faithful minister who has been perhaps the honoured instrument of producing the change: as the apostle Paul, addressing the converts of his ministry, says, *What is our joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of the Lord?* Or, as the beloved disciple says, *I have no greater joy than to see my children walk in the truth.* There is joy in the christian church on every accession of new converts: these, if genuine, constitute the true adornment of every christian society; in these its real prosperity consists; and melancholy is the state of that church, however externally prosperous, which does not value and desire the increase of its sincere penitents far above every other sign of its prosperity! But when it is said that *there is joy in heaven over every repenting sinner,* the assertion is to be understood in a meaning far more just and adequate. Repentance is there weighed in other scales than here. Angels view the change that is effected in a sinner's position before God, by repentance, from higher ground,—in all its aspects and dimensions, in all its bearings and consequences. They appreciate the greatness of that happiness which their fallen brethren have lost for ever, which they themselves enjoy, and which is now in reserve for the converted sinner. They taste the joy which is set before him; they dwell in the glory which is become the object of his desires; they *know* that whatever may be his present sufferings, they are light and merely for a moment,—

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they will ere long be exchanged for unspeakable pleasures,—he will have *all his tears wiped away* by God himself! Angels penetrate far deeper than it is in the power of the most exalted saints on earth to penetrate; *the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths,* of that eternity, which is the seal and crown of the felicity promised to every real penitent, which *stamps* it an eternal felicity,—even *eternal life, the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* They have long been engaged in contemplating the beauty of that holiness which dwells in God as its original; they have long enjoyed him as their portion, as their all; they have been exploring the true fountain of happiness through a long succession of ages, and they find it still as fresh and inexhaustible as ever; they have long basked in the beatific splendours of uncreated light! They comprehend the mysterious and undefinable value of the soul; its intense susceptibilities as a rational, moral, accountable substance, incapable alike of extinction and unconsciousness through infinite duration: these things are clear to their view; but they are obscure and confused to us, who *are of yesterday and know nothing,*—to us who are *crushed before the moth.*

5. In the last place, let me attempt a brief improvement of the subject which has now been presented. And, first, we may hence perceive the very great dignity and importance which attaches to the christian ministry. This is, beyond all doubt, the highest, the most sublime and sacred employment in which the sons of men can be

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engaged. Its greatness, however, arises not from any circumstances of a secular kind, not from any worldly splendour, but from its purely spiritual character,—from its immediate bearing on human salvation. That salvation, in all its parts, is entirely the work and gift of God; but in this, as in his other works, he employs created instruments; and the chief instruments by whose medium salvation is communicated,—by whose operation the great change of repentance and conversion is effected,—are the ministers of the gospel. The object they habitually have in view, as preachers of the word, is to persuade men to lay down the arms of their unnatural and guilty rebellion, and enter into the covenant of a merciful God: they stand as the commissioned *ambassadors of Christ:* their ministry is expressly a ministry of repentance and reconciliation *through the blood of the cross;* and it is powerful, in every instance, either as *a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.* It is an awful reflection, that *if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;* that we are called *a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved and in them that perish!* It may well make us ready to sink under the weight of our responsibility, while we exclaim with the apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Oh, how anxious should this reflection make us, to whom this ministry is committed, that the blood of immortal souls may not be charged against us; since the word we deliver cannot return void to Him that sent it, but must accomplish, in every case, its

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destined purpose; issuing either in the accumulation of guilt, or the increase of grace, to every one who hears it! And repentance, let it be remembered, necessary as it is to salvation, is taught alone by the gospel; it is only to be learned in the school of Christ. Philosophy knew nothing of repentance toward God, any more than of faith in Jesus Christ: it excited no salutary alarm in the conscience; it opened no view of the terrors of a righteous God. It is the gospel that has first done this; it has awakened a fear which becomes its own cure, and has first taught the sinner to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* The gospel has withdrawn the dark veil of nature's ignorance which hid God from our view, at the same time that it has *brought life and immortality to light in Jesus Christ!* If it fail to lead you to repentance, it fails of every thing for which it was designed; when *He* who had *the keys of death and hell* in his hand, could employ no stronger motive to repentance than that which he employs in assuring us, *If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall* DIE IN YOUR SINS!—*Ye shall* DIE IN YOUR SINS! But Jesus Christ, my brethren, came expressly to save you from this dreadful destiny; he came down from heaven to *give life unto the world;* to quicken those that were *dead in trespasses and sins;* and He is now *exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance as well as remission of sins;*—a repentance unto life, never to be repented of! There is enough here, surely, to awaken both your fear and your gratitude; to excite both a sense of the

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value of your soul, and a sense of the love of your Saviour. And these are motives peculiar to the gospel: to these motives it owes all its triumphs over the hearts of men: it is the gospel of your salvation; and well might it be ushered into the world by angelic beings with that annunciation, *Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth! Good-will towards men!*

2. In the second and last place, it is not necessary to produce motives to repentance from the Scriptures; the text alone is sufficient to show its importance: the simple fact, recorded in the text, is itself equivalent to a host of arguments—the fact that the only, or at least the chief event on earth, which excites joy in heaven, in the mind of God and of the holy angels, is—the repentance of a sinner! The barrier that separates eternity from time is impassable; the world beyond the grave is enveloped in utter obscurity. Had not revelation broken the silence of nature, never should we have known that a single event, which takes place in the present scene, is noticed in heaven: but now we are informed that there are occurrences on earth which excite deep attention and emotion in that higher world; and what are these? We are assured by the text that it is not the advancement of knowledge and civilization, not the splendours of art, nor the extension of empires and commerce, that attract the regard of those celestial intelligences; they are interested by objects of a very different description; they *rejoice over one sinner that repenteth!* The repentance of one

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solitary sinner, his conversion from the error of his way, has greater charms in the view of angels than even the spectacle of their own happy society, or that of all those saints on earth who persevere in pursuing the way to life eternal. And if the mere contemplation of this change is so sweet to angels in heaven, oh, how sweet must the experience itself be to the penitent!—for he it is who *tastes that the Lord is gracious*,—who tastes the unspeakable comfort that arises from the pardon of his sins and peace with God; he it is who goes on from strength to strength, from smaller to larger discoveries of the blessings that are in God and his Christ; he it is that *comes to God, comes to Jesus the mediator, and to the blood of sprinkling; to the general assembly and church of the first-born; to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to an innumerable company of angels.* Hence none ever experienced this change indeed, who did not consider it far above every other event of his life: he may have experienced many other changes, and some of a very pleasing kind; he may have passed from a state of poverty and hardship to a situation of affluence and every earthly comfort; or he may have been raised up from a bed of pain and sickness to the enjoyment of ease and health: but, if he is a true christian, if he has ever been a true penitent, his conversion is an event that can never lose its importance in his regard; the season of his first repentance is an æra in the records of his memory; it must always appear as a brilliant spot in his retrospect; it hallows the place and the

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hour that witnessed it; it lays him under a deeper, a more sacred obligation to the minister or the friend that was the honoured instrument of producing it, than he can entertain towards any inferior benefactor. And well it may; for it is a change of which the happy consequences shall endure for ever: all other benefits are temporal and transient; this alone is eternal: its value will be just as great when thousands of ages shall have passed away as it was at the first moment. Do you suppose those penitents, who occasioned this joy in heaven at the first preaching of the gospel, have found any abatement in their happiness by the lapse of eighteen centuries? No, my brethren! that happiness is just as fresh as on the day when they first *entered into the joy of their Lord.* The experience of eternity has rather increased than diminished its value. It is repentance that changes the whole aspect of things, whether present or future. The conviction that we have repented, that we have experienced that real, vital conversion which places us in a state of friendship with the Author of our being, this conviction lightens all afflictions, brightens every prospect, gives peace in the hour of death, and, at the last day,—amidst the wreck of elements, amidst the dissolution of the material heavens and earth,—the spark of celestial immortality that was first kindled in repentance, will emerge from the darkness of the sepulchre, and shine for ever in *the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness!* Ah, my brethren! the time is

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coming, and may be very near, when you will have nothing left to do, but to lay down your head on your death-bed pillow; and then, it is probable, if not before, yet then, you will begin to feel the force of what has now been suggested on the subject of repentance. In that hour, the least apprehension that you are a real penitent,—the faintest hope that you have laid hold on Christ with a true heart,—will give you far more satisfaction than any event that ever occurred to your attention. Oh, then, let none dismiss this subject with indifference: let none have listened to this discourse without being prevailed upon to retire this evening, and in the stillness of his chamber, and the solitude of his soul, to pour forth a fervent, importunate prayer, that he may be numbered among those penitent sinners who here occasion joy in heaven, and who will hereafter obtain eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

XVIII.

NATURE AND DANGER OF EVIL COMMUNICATIONS.

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, IN AUGUST, 1826.]

1 COR. XV. 33 —*Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners.**

THIS passage is taken from a heathen poet, Menander, and shews that Paul was not unacquainted with the literature of the pagan world.

* This sermon has been prepared by collating and blending the notes of the Hon. Mr. Baron Gurney with those of Joshua Wilson, Esq.

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By this he was peculiarly fitted for some parts of his work, being destined to bear the name of Christ before princes, magistrates, and philosophers, especially in the Roman and Grecian parts of the earth. The maxim accords with universal experience, and was worthy, therefore, of being adopted as a portion of those records of eternal truth, which are to be the guide of mankind in all succeeding ages.

The connexion is not that in which we should have expected such a maxim to be inserted, it is in the midst of a very affecting and instructive view of the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting; but the occasion of it was this: the Corinthians had received, from the intrusion of false teachers, principles which militated against that great doctrine. They had been taught to explain it away, and to resolve it merely into a moral process which takes place in the present world; interpreting what is said of the resurrection of the dead in a mystical and figurative manner. The apostle insinuates, that it was by a mixture of the corrupt communications of these men with the christian church, and the intimate contact into which they had permitted themselves to come with them, that they had been led off from the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, and rejected a primary part of the apostolic testimony. "For, if there be no resurrection of the dead, then," as he observed, "is Christ not risen, and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins." *

* 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14, 17.

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We see, that, notwithstanding the apostle had planted pure christianity among the Corinthians, and had confirmed it by the most extraordinary miracles and supernatural operations; yet, such was the contagion of evil example and corrupt communication, that the members of the Corinthian church, in a very short time, departed from the fundamental articles of the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ; and hence we may learn the importance, nay, the necessity, of being on our guard in this respect, and of avoiding such confidence in ourselves as might induce us to neglect the caution here so forcibly expressed. "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners."

Among the first things accomplished by our blessed Lord after his ascension, was the organization of the christian churches by his word and spirit through the instrumentality of his apostles. These he placed under suitable laws, appointing proper officers, and regulating them by the simple maxims of mutual love, forbearance, and charity: and no doubt the great design which he had in thus forming christian churches was to furnish room for the cultivation of a social spirit, without that danger of infection which would spring from it in a world abounding with evil examples, and actuated by evil maxims. Knowing that man is naturally a social creature, and prone to unite with his kind, he was pleased to form a select society wherein the exercise of the social affections might tend to the purification of the heart, the sanctification of the character, and the perfecting of man

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in the image of God and the Redeemer. A principle of action so efficacious as that of the social affections, by which men are perpetually assimilating themselves to one another, was not to be neglected by the great founder of our religion. He has consecrated it in the formation of christian churches, and thus erected the strongest rampart against the incursions of evil example, and the influence of a "world that lieth in wickedness."

In considering these words, there are three things to which I would request your serious attention:

In the first place, I shall state what those communications are which may be termed "evil."

Secondly, Explain the way in which they operate so as to "corrupt good manners:" and

Thirdly, Shall endeavour to enforce the warning, or exhortation, insinuated or comprehended in the passage, "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners."

I. It will be natural to inquire, What are "evil communications?" It is plainly impossible, in the present state of the world, entirely to avoid intercourse with bad men; this would be, as the apostle observed, "to go out of the world." "I write unto you," said he, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "not to company with fornicators; howbeit, not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world: but now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother

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be a fornicator, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat."* The intercourse of society must be maintained, without respect to the characters of men, to such an extent as the business of life requires. No one can possibly avoid occasional intercourse with those with whom habitual communications would be in the highest degree dangerous. If he is led into such society by the demands of his calling, the very necessity of going into it, in distinction from his choice of it, will excite a degree of caution well calculated to counteract the contagion; and, being in the path of duty, such a person may expect to be upheld by the succours of divine grace, which are never withheld from those who commit themselves to the guidance of God. An unsocial spirit, that would lead us, like the Essenes of old, into the solitudes of the wilderness, and to desert the active stations of human society, though it would be accompanied with the advantage of being entirely exempted from evil example, would be utterly inconsistent with the genius of christianity, and the example of our great Lord. But still, we must not, under pretence of yielding to the necessary calls of business, cultivate and cherish that "evil communication" which is here said to "corrupt good manners."

1. Now, in the first place, that communication may be justly regarded evil, in the highest sense, which is corrupt in relation to its immediate tendency to taint the purity of the mind by associations of a

* 1 Cor. v. 10, 11.

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lascivious and sensual nature. That conversation which is calculated to bring before the mind images of indelicacy and impurity, which owes its zest and force to the power of such associations, and is adapted to familiarize the mind to that from which a pure and chaste imagination recoils, must be considered in the highest degree of this kind; and how large a proportion of many societies owe their attraction almost entirely to this ingredient! The real christian will never, for a moment, put himself, voluntarily, into a society where this contagion prevails, and will take the earliest opportunity of escaping from it, if by accident he is thrown into such company.

2. But, short of this, that may be denominated evil communication, where the parties are of such a character that religion is not adverted to, or thought of in a serious or practical manner, where it has no hold upon the mind, where the fear of God is evidently dismissed, and there is no scriptural rule of action.

The mere absence of religion is sufficient to constitute that evil communication against which we are guarded. Those persons whose conversation is not plainly vicious, but who appear to have no true fear of God, no regard to the obligations of religion, who evidently live "without God in the world," without any habitual reference to a future state, must be considered as constituting a class of characters, with which, he who earnestly seeks his salvation will not voluntarily come into contact. It is not to be supposed that the

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christian can always select, even as the associates of his confidential hours, those who are partakers of divine grace, those who are really converted to God; though, as far as possible, it will be his wisdom to select such as these: yet, it is not too much to say, that he should avoid, as much as possible, any intimate connexion with such as appear to be not at all influenced by the considerations of religion, and seem entirely strangers to its hopes, fears, restraints and prohibitions; though their conduct may be in other respects unexceptionable and inoffensive.

3. It is almost unnecessary to observe, that is an evil communication, in a high degree, which abounds with objections to christianity, and is calculated to produce a doubt, either of its divine origin, or of the certainty of its most important truths. He who wishes to have his faith confirmed in the evidence of christianity, will never form an intimacy with those who are opposed to that evidence; who have thrown off the restraints of religion, renounced allegiance to the Saviour, and adopted the loose and sceptical doctrines of a licentious age.

4. And to this class we may add those who have discarded the peculiar doctrines of christianity, and who are envenomed with an antipathy to them, so as to be desirous, on all occasions, to multiply proselytes, by winning men to their own persuasion in regard to the distinctive points in which they are at variance with real christians of all ages. Such as have endeavoured to corrupt the

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fundamental principles of christianity must, in the esteem of persons who hold those principles sacred, be regarded as tempting to "evil communication." To this caution we are led by the context; for those who corrupted the faith of the Corinthians were not such as had rejected christianity altogether, not such as had entirely relapsed into heathenism or Judaism, but those who had denied the fundamental testimony of the apostles, contradicted the primary truths of christianity, and introduced another and different gospel from that which the apostles had promulgated. The apostle John lays down an injunction on this subject, which must be regarded as still in force: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."* We are not to encourage an intercourse of a voluntary kind with them, nor place ourselves under their influence: for that influence must be considered as antichristian in proportion as such persons have deviated from the fundamental doctrines which are taught in christianity.

5. They whose moral principles are loose, with respect to the great obligations of justice and equity, who indulge themselves in dishonourable practices, who propagate loose and licentious maxims with regard to the mode of conducting

* 2 John, ver. 9, 10.

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business, who acknowledge themselves to be ready to take any advantages, and are restrained by no other consideration than the penalty of the law, who are ready to sacrifice principle and conscience to filthy lucre, must be considered as a source of evil communication, against which we are here expressly warned.

II. But I proceed, in the next place, briefly to point out the way in which "evil communication" operates in corrupting "good manners."

You know very well, my brethren, that the order of the natural world is maintained by the operation of matter upon matter; and that the order of the moral world is maintained by the action of mind upon mind. As the great revolutions of nature are carried on by the reciprocal action of the various parts of which the visible universe consists, upon each other, whether of smaller portions or of greater masses; so that mysterious order which the Divine Being maintains in the moral world, is upheld and preserved by the mutual action of one mind upon another. This action is incessantly going on; and though it borrows for its instrumentality the organs of the body, yet the ultimate object is mind. The great medium through which this is maintained is the intercourse and conversation of man with man, which brings one mind into contact with another, and is perpetually modifying the mind which is thus drawn into union, and derives modification from that mind with which it converses. We are continually drawing and being drawn, impelling

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and resisting or yielding, assimilating ourselves to others and others to ourselves; nor is it possible to go into any company and come from it exactly in the same state of mind. The moral modification is perpetually going on; and, if we trace it exactly, we shall find that it is either evil or good; very seldom, if ever, entirely indifferent or neutral. It is one of the fundamental laws of nature, that our minds should be subject to perpetual modification from the minds of others; nor is it within the reach of our will to determine whether this influence shall be exercised or not. Yet we may determine to what influence we subject it; we may determine what society we will keep, but not what influence that society which we choose shall have upon us. It operates according to certain fixed and infallible laws, so that no person can, by any pretence of self-control, justify exposing himself to the action of a power, the operation of which is determined by laws quite independent of himself.

One of the first feelings of every person who goes into company is, to please and be pleased. If he be a person of a benevolent and social spirit, he goes with the very design of assimilating his mind, as much as possible, to the minds of those with whom he converses. This is a silent compact, without which pleasure can neither be imparted nor received. Just in proportion to the delicacy and force of this sympathy, is the pleasure derived from society; and they possess it in the most intense and vivid degree who can most imperceptibly slide into the feelings of others, so as

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to incorporate for a time their sentiments, feelings, and dispositions with their own. Hence we plainly perceive that there is a preparation in the very nature of society, that society especially which is chosen and of a voluntary nature, for an assimilation of our minds to the views and principles, sentiments and dispositions, of those with whom we converse.

We not only go into society unarmed, but we go with a preparation in favour of the action of the sentiments and the agency of the minds of others which is then operating upon us. We go with the intention of being pleased with the sympathies which that intercourse excites, and lay our hearts and minds, as we experience or expect social pleasure, open as much as possible to the full and entire action of the social instinct. Let us suppose then, at least, that the society into which we enter is not positively vicious in any other sense than as it is distinguished by a total absence of religion; let the persons with whom we associate be only characterized by an entire neglect of God, an absence of the fear of the Almighty; let their general conduct and deportment be such, and such only, as might be supposed to take place if the verities of religion were exploded, and the expectation of a future account entirely dismissed; it is not too much to say that this society itself will possess a very pernicious influence over any mind. It is dangerous to be accustomed to the absence of religion, and to be familiarized to the contemplation of the most

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solemn and important subjects in a state of disunion from God, and non-advertence to the prospect of eternity.

For a person, especially a young person, to be accustomed to hear life and death, judgement and eternity, and all the most serious and awful scenes of human existence spoken of, I will not say with unbecoming levity, but without advertence to religion, with regard only to physical causes and effects, is a dangerous process, and must be attended with the most serious peril. Next to the infusion of positive impiety, the most evil element in which the mind can be placed, is that out of which religion is expelled. To live without God in the world, and to converse with those who thus live, is, only in a lower degree than positive impiety, less dangerous to a creature who is in a state of probation, and whose everlasting interest depends on acquaintance with and obedience to his Maker.

I recollect, some years ago, that upon reading some very popular tales (Moral Tales they are styled), the talent of which is exceedingly great, but which are distinguished by the total absence of religion, and the want of all reference to it even in the scenes of death; the influence on my mind was such that, during the time devoted to that reading, it was with great difficulty and perplexity I was able to discharge my ministerial duties. It became, therefore, painfully evident to me, that to be conversant long together with trains of thought or associations of ideas from which religion is

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entirely excluded, is of most dangerous tendency; for religion is a positive thing, and at the same time it requires to be brought into view: it must be realized by an effort of the mind; it addresses not itself to the senses, does not occur naturally in the paths of life; it lies in an invisible state, and can only be realized by a positive act of faith, and be made operative by a serious exertion of the mental faculties, by calling our attention to spiritual impressions, and thereby overpowering the mechanical and necessary operations of sensible objects.

In the next place, suppose the society into which we enter be vicious in the sense before adverted to; that it be impure society, distinguished by the prevalence of indelicate jests and lascivious associations; such communication, it is unnecessary to say, *must* corrupt good manners. Must not the primary effect be, at least, gradually to enure the mind to the contemplation of vicious objects, without horror and disgust? Are you not aware that familiarity tends to weaken all impressions? As the mind is passive in receiving them, there is nothing so disgusting at the first view but it may be rendered indifferent, or even an object of complacency. Vicious objects, though they revolt a pure and chaste mind, though every well disciplined spirit turns aside from them with strong disrelish, yet they have such an alliance with the corrupt propensities of our nature, which always remain with us (for even the best are but partially sanctified), that the effect of bringing such objects

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frequently before the mind must be to subdue the antipathy, to wear off the impression of disgust, and soften the features of deformity; to teach us to contemplate such objects with indifference, till at length we shall certainly come to regard them with a greater or less degree of complacency. The horror of vice gradually subsides, till, before men are aware, they find themselves affected with the most impure conversation very differently from what they were at first. The chastity of the mind is violated; they have lost that instinctive recoil of disgust which such objects naturally inspire, and are become capable of partaking of them with that guilty zest, with which their association with the corrupt tendencies of our nature is too apt to invest them. This is a process perpetually going on. There are persons perpetually receiving the contamination of impurity by this channel. If, then, you meet with persons of this description, who delight to communicate the taint of impurity, and seek to draw down the minds of others to that gross element of sensuality in which they themselves are grovelling, avoid them, pass not by them, "turn from them and pass away;" recollect that such conversation is most essentially evil, and will, before you are aware, corrupt your "good manners."

Suppose, in the next place, that the society into which we enter be of an impious nature, distinguished by a rejection of christianity, or of its great and leading doctrines, and has in it, consequently, the contagion of impiety; such communication

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cannot fail, in the strongest degree, to "corrupt good manners." To hear objections against christianity continually repeated, without being answered, to hear the cause of Christ attacked in every possible form without being in a situation, in a becoming manner, to undertake its defence, must have an injurious tendency. Conversation, if we intend to please and be pleased, should never be a scene of continual dispute; we must either relinquish such society or hold our peace. That person who feels himself called upon on every occasion to defend his religion, will grow weary of contention, and seek repose in another kind of society. But if he continues in it, he will at length learn to be silent; silence will lead to acquiescence, and, finally, he will adjust his opinions to the standard of those with whom he associates. Every man makes the esteem of his companions a great and leading object. When a person, therefore, from that motive, learns to suppress his convictions, he will easily pass from thence to that guilty shame of Jesus Christ before men, which is one of the most baneful elements of corruption and degeneracy. It is dangerous to be in that society where all is against christianity and nothing in its favour; where it is perpetually assailed in a variety of forms, and nothing said in a serious, argumentative manner to sustain its interests and vindicate its sanctity. If any man supposes that he has strength of mind to continue in such society, without having the foundations of his confidence in the truths of christianity weakened, that man is

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entirely unacquainted with his own heart. You may feel conscious of no change of opinion, you may relinquish no article of faith, but the practical assent of the mind is capable of all sorts of varieties possible; the degree of conviction, the strength of that hold which religious principle has upon you, may be weakened in a most essential manner, before you have altered the speculative articles of your belief. The speculative belief in the great truths of christianity is, in pious minds, continually changing itself into practical belief, producing that sense of the reality of eternal things which justifies the definition given of faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Infidel society has the effect of weakening that practical conviction, of estranging the mind from the evidences of divine truth and bringing it into a state of obscurity; it is an element of darkness, and no person can preserve, within its sphere, a permanent and abiding conviction of such truths as are only seen by the eye of faith, and are best realized in the calmness of the sanctuary, and the solitude of the closet. Besides, we shall always find that those who have rejected the yoke of christianity, are anxious to propagate their disbelief; they have not the tranquillity of innocence, the confidence of truth; and they feel themselves strongly fortified, secure, and fearless, in proportion as they have swelled their confederacy, extinguished the conviction, and put out that light of faith in others, which is a condemning light to them, and holds out to them a fearful misgiving in the prospect

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of eternity. Those who are determined to bid farewell to christianity, have not done it in consequence of a serious process of conviction, but in consequence of consulting their passions, not their reason, determining to gratify their appetites, without restraint or control, and indulging in the pleasures and honours of this world without check. Conscious of this, in a greater or less degree they fear that the foundation they are resting upon may prove insecure; they wish, therefore, to be strengthened by the cooperation of others, and feel a guilty satisfaction in proportion as they multiply disciples among their associates, and are thus enabled to hear an echo in every voice, and see the reflection of infidelity in every breast. Is it not extraordinary that men who can only boast that they have discovered that man is nothing,—that this world is the whole of his existence,—that his destiny is withered, and shrunk to the shortest possible compass,—is it not extraordinary that they cannot, at least be silent; that they should be desirous to propagate a discovery so full of shame and reproach? The reason is, that they have fears on the side of religion, though they have not its hopes; they dread the truth of it, having given up all prospect of benefit from it, having relinquished all part in its consolations; therefore they feel their fears allayed, their perturbation subside, in proportion as they swell their numbers by an extensive confederation. They are "deceiving and deceived."

Let me earnestly impress it on every one who

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wishes to be saved; and if you do not, why approach the sanctuary of God, why hear the words of this book, why lift up a prayer to the throne of heaven in the name of the Great Redeemer? If you wish to be saved, go not into such society, or, if you enter it unawares, remain not in it. To choose such persons as confidants of your hours of affectionate and social intercourse, is to live in an element of contagion; it is to go into a pest-house; it is to take up your abode in the midst of the most virulent and destructive diseases. "Evil communications" will "corrupt good manners." No experience of our own,—no extent of observation may go to invalidate or impair the truth of this maxim, which is confirmed by the experience of all ages.

III. But I proceed, in the third place, briefly to explain the warning here given, and to enforce the caution which is strongly implied in the words "Be not deceived." There are many sources of self-deception; let me, therefore, warn every one not to be deceived.

1. In the first place, be not deceived by the adduction of false precedents. It may be suggested, that our Lord was pleased to mingle indiscriminately with all classes and descriptions of persons; but do not imagine that it would, on that account, be safe for *you* to imitate this part of his conduct. Recollect the infinite disparity of his situation and character, and yours. He came into a world of contagion, but it was to impart the medicine of life; he came to a great infirmary, but he was himself the physician of souls; he "came to

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save sinners," but was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."* When Satan himself came, he found nothing in him. Does it follow that we, who are placed at so infinite a distance beneath him, should be safe in such contagion? "Be not deceived;" do not take a partial view of our Saviour's character; do not consider one portion of it only—his exposure to moral danger,—while you forget his sanctity, his watchfulness, his care over his own conduct, his self-government, and the constant use of those rules of prudence and piety which are recommended by other parts of his example. If you can find an infallible way to overcome temptation, and achieve the victory over the enemies of your salvation, you may then plead the precedent of our Lord's example against the genius of his religion and the import of his precepts. It was impossible that his spotless character should be contaminated. Can *we* plead that exemption and impossibility?

2. Be not deceived by your past experience. You may be ready to say, that you have been frequently exposed to vicious society,—you may be living in it now, and perceive none of those evils, discern none of that degeneracy and corruption to which we have adverted; and you appear to pass through it with impunity: "Be not deceived:" you are very ill judges, it may be, of the state of your own minds; you may imagine that you have received no injury because you have fallen into no great crime, have violated none of

* Heb. vii. 26.

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the more essential laws of social morality; but, if you look within, you may perceive a preparation for the commission of these, in the weakening of that conscience which preserves you in the fear of God, in the decay and eclipse of the spirit of faith, in the relaxed hold of the great prospects of eternity which you had before. What has been the effect of such society on your private devotions? Has it carried you to your closet? Has it prepared you to retire for communion with God? Has it endeared to you the Scriptures, or estranged you from them? Has it made the transition easy, to the duties of private and solitary piety? Did you find such society calculated to make it more difficult, or more easy, for you to enter into the true spirit of religion; and to practise those duties, without which all the devotions of the sanctuary will be only "walking in a vain shew," and seeking the applause of man, instead of the approbation of Him who "seeth in secret?"

3. Do not be deceived by any complacent reference to the time of life at which you have arrived, or the progress in religion which you have already made. Though the influence of evil society upon the young is of the most corrupting tendency; though their minds, in the period when the character is formed, are most subject to its hurtful influence; yet, the danger of "evil communications" is by no means confined to them. No: at whatever period of life you have arrived, "evil communications" will "corrupt good manners." Habits are lost in the same way as they are

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acquired; the fruits of long custom in right action are speedily dissipated and destroyed by exposure to contrary custom in doing wrong; and the mind of no person has arrived at such a state of confirmation in holy habits as to make a relaxation of vigilance safe, or enable it to yield itself up securely to the casual influence of place and society. Religion is a perpetual warfare; religion is a perpetual exercise of self-command; it is a perpetual reference to the will of God; it is a perpetual use of the power of self-government, and attention to the invisible eye of Him that seeth in secret. If you commit yourself to evil society now, what shall hinder you in the most advanced age from forsaking the law of God, and disgracing the latter part of your life by conduct totally different from that which conferred dignity on your youth? Solomon, in his youth, feared God, but when old age came upon him, through the contagious example of his idolatrous wives, he forsook the God of his fathers and exposed his kingdom to perdition and ruin. No, my brethren, there is no such thing as depending upon any force of habit, unless its influence produces right conduct at present; if it inspires us with a holy resolution, and gives a right view of our duty at the present moment, and determination to adhere to it, we may rejoice in that habit; but if it produces recumbency, a slothful dependence upon God, and neglect of the precautions of religion and the rules of duty, we have reason to believe, that he who thus thinketh he standeth, will soon fall.

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4. Be not deceived by any supposed strength of resolution with which you may enter into such society. It is much easier abstained from than renounced. The paths of sinners are much more easily shunned than they are quitted. When confederacies are formed it requires a powerful effort to break them. It is far less difficult to keep out of society than to resist its current. The action of fire is mechanical and necessary, you may approach it or not; so you may avoid evil company if you please. The ranks of impiety are not so thin as not to give you sufficient warning to escape them; but when you are in them, in the very focus of temptation, no resolution you can exert, will, for a moment, stop its progress: you must submit to its action; you are committed to your fate and must take the consequences; you must be deteriorated and degenerated with the causes of deterioration and degeneracy. Be not deceived, then, by supposing that any previous resolution has considerable influence on the conduct of men, when they are off their guard and open to the impression of social affections. This is the season, of all others, in which mental resolution has least power; the mind is not only open, but, before it is aware, becomes relaxed; the love of association soon comes to supplant all other thoughts; all the cooler reflections, the wiser resolves of the closet, vanish; all the force of the most strenuous intentions melt like wax before the sun, in the warmth of social intercourse. In proportion as the social affections are vivid and warm, in that proportion is the necessary

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effect in dissipating and giving to the wind the force of the most strenuous resolutions.

Hence permit me to suggest one or two cautions of prudence. In the first place, let those who have a serious sense of religion bind themselves with the vows of God, and enter on a solemn profession of them, at an early period of life. Enter into the church of God, take upon you the vows of the Almighty; if your hearts are sincere with him, if you have reason to believe you are in earnest in seeking after him, and have committed yourself to the Redeemer, take upon you his yoke openly, bear his name upon your forehead before men. This will have the happiest effect in strengthening you against the force of evil example. Recollecting the nature of your engagements, you will be awakened to a sense of consistency of conduct, and be shocked at the thought of bringing reproach on the cause of God. A sense of self-respect will come in aid of the higher principles of religion, and the higher motives to virtuous conduct. You will remember that you have assumed, if I may so say, a peculiar caste; and when you look upon the pure and holy robe of the profession of christianity you thus wear, you will be anxious, if you have been sincere in making that profession, to keep it "unspotted from the world." It is well, in such a state of temptation, to render retreat difficult, if not impossible, to put yourself on ground from which you cannot retreat. He who has done this effectually, has given up his name to Christ, and enrolled himself among his disciples, has

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gone forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach, has thus cut off his own retreat; he renders it impossible to consult his earthly interests at the expense of piety, without bringing upon himself all the reproaches of his conscience, the ridicule of unbelievers, and the contempt of his companions and of mankind.

Let all young persons, then, bind themselves with the vows of God, and unite themselves to those whom God has touched by his Spirit, and is guiding, under the convoy of the Captain of Salvation, to eternal glory. The church will willingly receive all such as are desirous of uniting themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, and will say, as Moses did to Hobab: "Come with us, and we will do you good; we are going to the land of which the Lord our God hath said, I will give it you."* Are you linked in with society from which you find it difficult to break? Change your place of abode, make a sacrifice of worldly convenience, nay, relinquish some of the tendernesses of life for the purpose of securing your safety: there is no place so dangerous, none from which you ought to flee with so much rapidity, as that which is the seat of contagion, where, enlinked with vicious associates, you cannot remain without being in the way to perpetuate your confederacy with sinners. Flee from such a place; as you would not "walk in the counsel of the ungodly;" stand not "in the way of sinners," lest you "sit down in the seat of the scorners." Flee,

* Numb. x. 29.

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then, as for your life. These, you know, are different stages in depravity, different degrees of progress in corruption; walking "in the counsel of the ungodly" is the first; he who does that will next "stand in the way of sinners," and that is a ready and proper preparation for sitting down "in the seat of the scornful."* Do you wish not to be ashamed of Christ before men? Go into society which shall not tempt you to that shame; seek those associates before whom you may, without a blush, lift up your heads and avow your attachment to a once crucified, but now glorified, Redeemer.

Let it be remembered, that with those with whom you voluntarily associate here, you shall be associated hereafter by the disposer of all things, for ever: with those persons with whom you choose to spend your time, you must spend your eternity; these are inseparably allied. Those who choose the society of the vicious, those who keep company with the enemies of God in this world by choice and election, will have their portions with such in the regions of everlasting darkness. Eternity is pressing on: ask yourselves, then, with whom would you wish to be associated when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall proclaim that "there shall be time no longer." With whom would you choose to rise? With whom would you have your everlasting portion? With patriarchs and prophets? With evangelists and apostles? With saints and martyrs now

* Psalm i. 1.

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shining forth in the glories of celestial radiance? or with those who, having slighted the warnings and despised the mercies of the Lord, must assuredly "awake to shame and everlasting contempt."* There are but two societies in the universe, the church and the world; the servants of God and the servants of Satan; the votaries of time and the votaries of eternity: they are each of them claiming your regard, and saying to ingenuous youth, "Come with us," and holding out their respective allurements and attractions. One presents "the pleasures of sin for a season," to be followed by bitter remorse and everlasting despair; the other, the prize of immortality, the society of saints, calm of conscience, quiet of mind, the peace of a self-approving spirit, consolation unutterable, and that only as the earnest of the pleasures to be enjoyed at the right hand of God; that fulness of joy which is for evermore.

Recollect, time is pressing on, and we shall soon be that which we shall continue to be for ever. Do not say, I will remain a little longer in the society of wicked persons, I will loiter a little longer in the pursuit of sin, and sensual gratification, in the neglect of God and religion. While you are halting, God may decide for you; he has no sympathy with hesitation, but looks with contempt and abhorrence on the infatuation, and wretched folly and guilt of that mind which prefers the applause of the world, the pleasures of sin, and the gratification of a moment, to the "exceeding

* Dan. xii. 3.

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and eternal weight" of his favour and friendship. He has no sympathy with such persons, he abhors them; at least, they are exercising his patience every day. Despise not, then, "the riches of his goodness and long-suffering," lest, while you are halting between two opinions, God should lift up his hand "and swear that you shall not see his rest." "To-day," then, I say, to-day, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness."*

Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, "for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"† For you are the temple of the living God, if you are Christians; and to be such I trust every one here is aspiring, as He hath said, "I will dwell with them and walk in them, and I will bless them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Therefore, "come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Most High God."‡

* Psalm xcv. 7, 8. † 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.
‡ 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

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XIX.

THE EVILS OF IDOLATRY, AND THE MEANS OF ITS ABOLITION.*

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONS, NOVEMBER 2, 1826.]

ISAIAH ii. 18.—" *The idols He shall utterly abolish.*"

THE progress of Christianity in the world has already been so great and wonderful, as to carry evidence of its divine original, and of its promised final triumph over every false religion. Its vast effects have been produced principally by the simple instrument of preaching its doctrines, attended by the promised influence of the Holy Spirit. The same instrument, attended by the same influence, may be reasonably expected to effect the ultimate conversion of all the nations. This most desirable object we are on the present occasion assembled to promote.

It is agreed by expositors, that, in the connexion of the text, the success of the gospel is predicted:—as a remarkable feature by which its success would be distinguished, the destruction of idolatry is mentioned in the words I have selected; in which two things are proposed to our attention; the evil to be abolished, and the means of its abolition.

I. The evil to be abolished. This, as you will observe, is idolatry. It has been commonly and very properly distinguished as of two kinds, *literal*

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

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and *spiritual.* The latter, or *spiritual* idolatry, is an evil which, by the apostasy of our nature, attaches to all mankind, whether inhabiting christian or pagan regions, except those individuals whose hearts have experienced a renovation by the Spirit of God. It is to the former, or *literal* idolatry, that the prophet in the text refers: this the connexion shews, where mention is made of those *idols of silver and gold,* which the converted idolaters would cast away. The progress of Christianity was, from the first, marked by the cessation of idol worship; and this was effected by the same means which are still to be employed. Men were called to *turn from their dumb idols to serve the living God.* The abandonment of a false worship must prepare the way for a moral revolution: men must cease from the adoration of images, before they can in any sense be worshippers of the true Jehovah.

There are two principal points of view in which we may regard the evil nature and effects of idolatry; its aspect toward God, and its aspect toward man. In the former aspect, it appears as a crime; in the latter, as a calamity: thus contemplated, it appears as an evil destructive equally to the divine glory, and to human happiness. Man naturally tends to this evil; and one generation after another gradually accumulated the follies of superstition, till it reached the monstrous extreme of gross idolatry.

1. The word of God everywhere reprobates idolatry as an *abominable thing* which the soul of

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God abhors. To provide against this, was a principal object in the political and municipal department of the Mosaic law. It is expressly prohibited by the first and the second commandment of the moral law; the first being designed to confirm the worship of the true God; the second, to exclude every idolatrous form of worship. Idolatry makes a material symbol of the invisible God; but so jealous is the Divine Being of his own honour, that he has forbidden, not only the worship of any other or false god, but even the worship of *Himself* by the medium of a graven image. The golden calf was a representative of the God of Israel; and the calves set up by Jeroboam were the same: yet the worship of the golden calf occasioned the slaughter, by the divine command, of three thousand persons; and the executioners of divine vengeance were extolled for having forgotten the feelings of nature toward their nearest kindred: every man was commanded to slay his brother or his son, and so to consecrate himself to the Lord.* Where God's honour was so deeply concerned, men were to lose sight of common humanity. When the Israelites were tempted by the artifices of Balaam to commit idolatry at Baal Peor, twenty-four thousand were slain at once; the memory of Phinehas was immortalized on account of the holy zeal he displayed in the destruction of certain conspicuous offenders; and the Moabites were devoted to extermination, because, in this respect, they had proved a snare to Israel. According to the divine appointment,

* Exod. xxxii. 29.

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credit was to be denied to the testimony of an idolater, and his life was to be taken by his nearest relative. All this marks the disposition, with regard to idolatry, of that Being, who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* If he does not now punish it as he once did, it is not that he hates it now less than formerly: but he spares men, that they may be brought to the knowledge of his will and his salvation: *Now he commands all men every where to repent, because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by Jesus Christ:* and he desires that we, who have received the gospel, should carry the tidings of this command to all mankind.

Idolatry is, with respect to the government of God, what treason or rebellion is with respect to civil government. It is the setting up of an idol in the place of the Supreme Power; an affront offered to that Majesty, in which all order and authority is combined and concentered, and which is the fountain of all social blessings. Hence, in the eye of God, nothing can dilute the turpitude, or diminish the guilt of this offence. It makes no difference what may be the character of the rival: there is still an entire transfer of allegiance from *the blessed and only Potentate* to a palpable usurper; and the guilt remains the same. Were we even to suppose the character of the idol, immaculate as that of Jesus Christ and God himself, the case would not be materially altered; an invasion would still be committed on the immense empire of the Most High. Were the idol even cast in a mould

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of the purest moral beauty, it would still, as an idol, be a monster deserving universal execration.

Idolatry is an evil which, where it exists, taints every apparent virtue; because it destroys the soul of duty, which is obedience to the divine will, conformity to the divine command. Though there exists an eternal rectitude, independent of written revelation; yet we, short sighted-creatures, must resign ourselves to be guided by the *revealed* will of God: conformity to this is our only sure standard. And the Scriptures everywhere assure us that nothing is acceptable to God that is not done under the influence of a sincere regard to his will. This is perfectly reasonable. Suppose a person to do accidentally, unintentionally, just what you would wish to have done; yet if, in so doing, he had no design to please you, will his conduct satisfy you as if he had acted from a regard to your wish, as your devoted servant? Your will, your authority, never entered into his views and motives; and can he expect that you should reward him? Thus nothing is done rightly, nothing to any good purpose, where GOD is not regarded: the *single eye* is wanting; and, *that* wanting, *the whole body is full of darkness.* Men may do much good from merely self-interested or ambitious motives; and they may *have their reward,* the only reward they ever sought, in success and applause. Nebuchadnezzar was employed by God as a rod to scourge his guilty people; and, having served that purpose, was cast aside. Pagan philosophers and heroes have exercised the virtues of temperance

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and moderation without the least advertence to the Divine will; and hence, as Augustine remarks, their virtues can only be regarded as *splendid sins*. "God was not in all their thoughts;" God was as much forgotten in their virtues as he was in their vices; they remained as dead in sin, because as dead to God, as ever. They sought to be admired and idolized in a world they were so soon to quit by creatures whose applause was of no value; and they were just as destitute of spiritual vitality as the most profligate of their fellow-mortals! Just as, amidst the awful solemnities of the last day, we may imagine the impassioned admirer of nature or art beholding with regret so many fair objects and heart-ravishing scenes, in which he once delighted, all alike consigned to the final conflagration; even so the christian may be supposed, on that occasion, touched with a momentary pang, to see many who here excited his admiration, many who perhaps obtained his esteem and awakened his tenderest sympathies, yet numbered at last with them that are *lost!*—although he must then be satisfied, in a degree inconceivable at present, of the justice of their condemnation; inasmuch as, (whatever they might have been besides,) they were dead to God; they worshipped the creature more than the Creator; they were, in the essence of character, idolaters.

With respect to the *origin* of idolatry, it is probable that men began by raising images to the memory of departed heroes, and afterwards transferred their homage to the image itself; until they

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gradually descended to the worship of the meanest objects, even those which are the most obscene and unutterable. There is nothing so vile, filthy, disgusting, horrible, that has not, by some nation, been selected as an object of worship. Happily we, my brethren, are situated so remote, both in time and place, from the principal of these abominations, that we are able to form only a very inadequate idea of the enormous folly to which they have proceeded.

2. But we turn to contemplate idolatry on another side; in its aspect toward man, its influence on society.

The apostle Paul informs us, that God hath shewn to men what may be known concerning himself; that his invisible being, his eternal power and godhead, may be clearly seen and understood by the works of creation; so that those are *without excuse* who have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image in the likeness of corruptible man, of birds, and beasts, and reptiles.* They are *without excuse;* their conduct admits of no apology: *wherefore,* as the apostle adds, *God gave them up to a reprobate,* a base, and undiscerning *mind;* and, *as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them up to their own vile affections,* and left them to violate even the laws of nature.

The origin of all the atrocities they committed was to be found in aversion to God; dislike of the spirituality and purity of his character; a desire,

* Rom. i. 19—25.

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like Cain, to retire from the presence of their Maker; a wish to forget a Being whose character they knew to be utterly uncongenial with their own. This disposition originally led men to substitute idols for God. Those idols would, of course, be conceived of a character unlike that of God. Men would never form their imaginary deities after the model of him whom they disliked: accordingly, they receded to the utmost possible distance from all resemblance to the holy, omniscient, glorious God of Abraham and of Israel. Impure themselves, they were not disposed to adopt a God of purity: full of malignant passions, they would form no conception of a God of love—a Father pouring out his blessed fulness, and delighting in beneficence to his vast family. No, my brethren, their gods were of a different description; vindictive tyrants, divided, like themselves, in eternal factions and contentions; each pursuing his favourite objects and patronizing his adopted party.

Homer, the first who appears to have composed a regular picture of idolatry, paints his Jupiter, or supreme deity, as deficient in every divine attribute; in omnipotence, in justice, and even in domestic peace. He paints Juno as the victim of eternal jealousy; and with good reason for her jealousy, when the earth was peopled, according to Homer, with the illegitimate progeny of Jupiter, to whom almost every hero traced his pedigree. Mars was the personification of rage and violence; Mercury, the patron of artifice and theft. How

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far such a mythology influenced the character of its votaries, it is perhaps impossible for us to know: nothing could be more curious than to look into the mind of a heathen. But it is certain that the mind must have been exceedingly corrupted by the influence of such a creed: and probably each individual idolater would be influenced by the deity whose character happened to be most accommodated to his own peculiar passions. An Achilles would emulate a Mars in ferocity and deeds of blood: an Ulysses would be a Mercury in craft and stratagem: while the ambitious mind of an Alexander or Julius Cæsar would aspire to act a Jupiter on earth. What a state of society must *that* be, in which no vice, no crime could be perpetrated that was not sanctioned by the very objects of religious worship! What a religion *that* which exerted an *antagonist* force against conscience itself!—a religion which silenced or perverted the dictates of the moral sense, *the thoughts that should either accuse or excuse us* within! The temples of Venus, we are informed, were crowded by a thousand prostitutes, as servants and representatives of that licentious goddess; the very places of their worship were the scenes of their vices, and seemed as if they were designed to consecrate the worst part of their conduct!

In modern India, idolatry is exemplified on a scale scarcely less extensive; and everywhere it is marked by two leading qualities, *cruelty* and *impurity*. The Hindoo deities are of a ferocious and sanguinary character, and are supposed to

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drink out of the sculls of their victims. The more we become acquainted with these idolaters, like Ezekiel, when he surveyed the *chambers of imagery*, we discover only the *greater abominations*. In their system, as connected with their conduct, there is a perpetual action and re-action; vice generating idols, and idols fortifying vice. First, we find mere abstractions of the mind formed concerning the Deity; these are next embodied in idols; and all the human passions are enlisted by devotion itself on the side of vice. *Here*, in a country influenced by the light of revelation, we are accustomed in all our ideas to associate religion and morality: we never suppose a religious man can be any other than a good moralist; when we see a person who fears God, and makes a conscience of thoughts, we never doubt that his practice is correct; his word is as an oath to us; because the standard he adopts is the Divine will, and he is himself a faint image and adumbration of the moral glory of God. But the fire of piety, instead of kindling, would only quench the fire of idolatry. A man must be unfitted for that worship, in exact proportion to his fear and love of God. The image of Satan must displace the image of God, in the heart of every idolater.

II. Hitherto we have attended to a melancholy subject, and have seen only the nakedness and degradation of our race. We must now more briefly advert to a brighter scene, presented by the prophet, when he assures us that Jesus Christ (of whom he is speaking) will utterly abolish

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idolatry, and sweep it from the face of the earth with the besom of destruction; not a worshipper of idols shall be left at last, but His wrath shall consume that man. In sending the gospel to the heathen, you offer, as it were, the holy incense, like Moses, when he interposed between God and the perishing Israelites: you stand, like him, *between the dead and the living*,—the dead and the living for eternity!—and you *stay the plague!*

No sooner did christianity appear, than its formidable power, as the opponent of idolatry, was felt and manifested. Pliny,* writing about seventy years after the death of Christ, declared to the Emperor Trajan that, in the province of Bithynia, where he presided as pro-consul, the temples were nearly deserted: a striking proof how rapidly the system of paganism gave way before the sword of the Spirit wielded by the primitive missionaries. One unhappy exception, indeed, still remains, in the idolatrous worship of the Romish church; but the triumphs of the gospel are advancing, and as we have lately seen the islands of the South Sea casting away their ancient idols *to the moles and to the bats*, so shall every system of idolatry and false worship be utterly, and for ever, overthrown.

Preaching, an instrument so unpromising in the view of carnal reason, has been the chief instrument employed in producing these moral revolutions. *When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God;* when the only Being

* See the note at page 455 of this volume.

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against whom all conspired, was the Maker of all, and men proved themselves to be blind at noonday; *it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* Nothing but this can save them: woe be to that man who teaches that there is any other method of salvation than the preaching Jesus Christ. This is the instrument which God has crowned with success. Before the rising Sun of Righteousness, idolatry melted away, as wax before the fire; and effects, the reverse of those produced by that baneful system, attend the beneficent progress of the gospel. Cruelty and impurity, disappear in holiness and brotherly love. Christianity, instead of severing the ties of nature, harmonizes and unites the most distant from each other, as brethren; according to the design of our Saviour, *that he should gather together in one the children of God, that were scattered abroad:* while those, who before were stained with every vice, are purified in their hearts and conduct by the influence of heavenly truth.

In proportion, my brethren, as you value the blessings of religion, you will wish that others should partake them with yourselves: in proportion as you are disposed to pray, *Lord, evermore give us this bread;* you will desire to communicate it to all beside. You will love your brethren, as you love your Saviour, *not having seen* either: if you have been divinely taught, this will be your feeling in regard to all mankind. That man's heart is not right with God, who can look, unmoved, upon the vast heathen world, lying *dead*

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in trespasses and sins; dead by a moral, a voluntary death, such as cannot be pleaded in arrest of the divine judgement. But, though they have destroyed themselves, in God is their help; he has laid help on one that is mighty to save even to the uttermost. The Father has appointed his beloved Son to be the dispenser of all spiritual blessings, as Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be the dispenser of bread to the perishing Egyptians; and, as Pharaoh answered every application by saying, Go to Joseph; the Father says to sinners, Go to Jesus Christ with all your wants; no man can come to the Father but by him. He is the ark, in which all the hopes, all the treasures, of human nature are reposited; in him is all the fulness of God.

A cause so great and sacred as that of christianity absorbs all those differences and divisions, of a minor kind, that exist among us; and I trust and believe there is not a missionary of our own Baptist communion, who would not infinitely prefer the conversion and salvation of one soul, to making the whole heathen world adopt our views of a disputed and comparatively inconsiderable ceremony. If there *is* such a man, I am no party to his sentiment; there exists no communion between us; let not my soul enter into that man's secret! No, my dear brethren! we, I trust, have far higher views; the only kind of proselytes we desire to make are proselytes to God and Jesus Christ! In the promotion of such a cause, we are ready to forget our own denomination, and to co-operate with every other;

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we feel that, with such an object proposed, were *we* to sit still, the very stones in our streets would cry out, and almost rise up into bibles and missionaries! Contribute, brethren, to the support and extension of this sacred enterprise, and you will convert *uncertain riches* into the means of bestowing *the true riches*,—of diffusing *the unsearchable riches of Christ*; your contributions will become, in the hand of God, bibles, instructions, prayers, sermons; the messengers of saving mercy to many immortal souls.

XX.

CHRIST'S MISSION FOR THE ADOPTION OF SONS IN THE FULNESS OF TIME.*

[PREACHED AT MELBOURNE, NEAR ROYSTON, SEPTEMBER 1827.]

GAL. iv. 4, 5.—*But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

THE Galatians, among whom Paul had taught the religion of Christ, were soon led astray as to some of its most essential and important doctrines, by the arts of Judaizing teachers.

They admitted and inculcated the obligation of circumcision and other ceremonies of the ancient law, maintaining that without these men could not be saved; thereby vacating and superseding the sacrifice of Christ, and denying the sufficiency

* Printed from the Notes of the Hon. Mr. Baron Gurney.

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of his mediation and death for the salvation of sinful men. Of these Paul testified that, if any man submitted to circumcision on this ground, with a view to procure acceptance with God, or as any ingredient of justification in his sight, for such a person Christ had died in vain. He subverts the only foundation laid in Zion, by mixing those observances of the law of Moses, which were typical of Christ and his kingdom, with his satisfaction, as the ground of acceptance with the just and holy God.

In order to recall the Galatians from these errors, he directs their attention in the words just read, to the great and fundamental doctrine of Christ's incarnation and atonement, to its completeness and efficacy, not only in saving us from guilt and condemnation, but in reinstating us in the divine favour, and bestowing on us inexpressible privileges; admission into his family and the reception of that spirit of adoption which is the spirit of his Son, whereby Christians feel the dispositions and perform the duties of obedient children to their heavenly Father. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

In these words there are three things that demand our attention:

I. The mission of Jesus Christ, and the manner in which he manifested himself.

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II. The design of his mission; "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

III. The fitness of that season which God, in his infinite wisdom, appointed for this purpose: it was in "the fulness of time."

I. In the first place, these words present to our attention the great fact of Christ's mission from the Father, and his appearance in our world. Of the dignity of the person of our Saviour, as denoted by the expression, "God sent forth his Son," we have sufficient notice in various parts of the New Testament.

The character of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is placed in contrast with the dignity of angelic intelligences, and is asserted in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than they, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And

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again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." To denote the inexpressible dignity of Jesus Christ, as being one with the Father in his most essential prerogatives and perfections, he is here styled "his Son." The Father gave him birth; he came into the world having existed before it; "he came unto his own, and his own received him not;" even He, that Word which "was with God and was God," and without whom "was not any thing made that was made," He, the Eternal Word and Son of God, "became flesh;" that is, assumed our nature, "and dwelt among us." His goings forth were from everlasting, and his manifestations among the ancient tribes of Israel not unfrequent. We have reason to believe that those symbolical appearances of God, by which the patriarchs and Moses and the prophets communed with the Most High, were anticipated representations and appearances of Christ. But they were occasional and transient, and in them he wore "the form of God;" but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son to take up his abode with human nature, to tabernacle among us.

The manner in which this manifestation was made, and the leading circumstances attending it, are marked out in this passage, "he was made of

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a woman," and "made under the law." Every one must be aware of the peculiarity of the phrase, *made of a woman,* and will no doubt infer from it something peculiar in the circumstances of our Saviour's birth. Accordingly, we find the sacred writers distinctly inform us of the miraculous production of our Lord by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus the angel saluted the blessed virgin, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." In every possible sense Jesus Christ possesses this character. In his pre-existent state he was the Word and the Son of God; in his human nature he bore that relation as being the immediate production of the Almighty; as it is also said of Adam in the genealogy given by St. Luke that *he* was the Son of God.

This particular of our Saviour's existence, as being miraculously conceived by the Holy Ghost, is frequently noticed in the Old and New Testament, and no doubt possesses great importance in the plan of redemption. Thus, when the first transgression entered into the world by the subtlety of Satan, God pronounced this curse upon that apostate spirit who presented himself under the semblance and form of a serpent, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust thou shalt eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her

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seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." No satisfactory account can be given of Jesus Christ, who is here plainly prophesied of as the seed of the woman, but in the circumstance alluded to in the passage before us; that is, his miraculous conception, in relation to which he was emphatically and peculiarly made of a woman, standing in a more immediate connexion with that sex than the other. When God was pleased to afford a remarkable and illustrious promise of the appearance of his Son, it was combined with the mention of this particular, "the Lord himself shall give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," which is interpreted by the evangelist, Matthew, "God with us." Again, St. Luke says, "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph;" plainly intimating that he was not so, but was in reality the immediate production of a divine power.

In the second chapter of the first epistle to Timothy, notice is taken of the circumstances attending the entrance of sin in the first transgression. When inculcating the duty of silence and submission on the part of the women, and particularly in the church of Christ, he says, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved *in* child-bearing" (as we have it; but it is improperly rendered, and should be, *by* child-bearing) "if they continue in faith and charity, and

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holiness with sobriety." There is no reason to doubt that the true meaning is *by the child-bearing*, referring not to the pains of parturition, but to the extraordinary event of the birth of our Saviour in a miraculous manner. She shall be saved, notwithstanding she was the means of human ruin by admitting the solicitations of Satan, if she continue in the exercise of christian virtue, and is herself a faithful servant of the Lord God; she shall be saved by the child-bearing, by that signal and miraculous child-bearing which took place in the birth of the Messiah. The apostle is not adverting to any temporal circumstance; he is speaking of the entrance of sin by means of the woman, and it is natural to throw in a compensatory circumstance, reminding us, that as the inferior sex had been the source of human perversion, so it had the honour, in compensation, of being the immediate instrument of the production of the Messiah, by whom our recovery was effected. And the condition which follows, "if they continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety," puts this interpretation beyond doubt; as there is the greatest connexion between faith and virtue, without which our faith is vain, but none whatever between perseverance in holiness and exemption from the pains of child-birth.

The circumstances of our Saviour's incarnation placed him at an immeasurable distance from all the other parts of the human race. He was the immediate production of God; by his divine power he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and thereby

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completely exempted from the taint of original sin, which attaches to all the posterity of Adam. He was the holy thing born of a virgin. He was by constitution placed in the same state as our first parents; he underwent a similar but severer trial, and continued to maintain his innocence against all the assaults of Satan, overcoming his stratagems by his wisdom and sanctity, and his violence by his powers of endurance.

In the next place it is said, he was "made under the law." The term *made* here plainly implies that he was put into a situation different from that which was originally natural to him. Such an expression could not with propriety be used respecting any one who was, by the constitution of his nature and at every period, subject to the law. It is best illustrated by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," and adverting to the striking passage in the epistle to the Philippians, where St. Paul is inculcating the duty of condescension and lowliness among christians: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation" (or emptied himself, divested himself of that glory which he had before all worlds), "and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here we see Christ is set forth as the greatest example of condescension, in that, though he bore

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the form of God, yet he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. These particulars could not have evinced any humility in our Saviour, on the supposition of his having no previous existence, nor a nature higher than human. No person was ever praised for humility in that respect, that he was found in fashion as a man, or appeared as the servant of the Most High: these are the necessary appendages of his condition and existence, quite foreign from his will, and cannot for a moment enter into the consideration of that part of his moral character which respects lowliness of mind. But if we believe, as the Scriptures tell us, that Jesus Christ was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," that he "was with God and was God," nothing can set forth his condescension in a more striking point of view than his taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Then, indeed, there was room for choice and election respecting his appearance in our world, and that event must have been the effect of his own purpose and the object of his entire complacency. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."

The necessary condition of every *creature*, however exalted, is that of submission to the law of God. The obligation of obeying his precepts and of sustaining his penalties in case of the violation

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of them is inherent, we have the strongest reason to believe, in every finite nature. We cannot dismiss from our minds the connexion between being produced by the Divine Being and being subjected to his law. But here we have presented to us a new and extraordinary spectacle,—that of a person in our nature, who has taken upon him that nature by appearing in the form of man, and thereby *become* subject to the law of God. *He* was "*made* under the law;" whereas all other creatures *are* under it by the very terms of their existence, by the very condition of their nature. He was *made under the law* as really as he was *made of a woman.*

Our Lord was made under the law in every sense. Divines have generally considered that Jesus Christ was made under three laws, or under the law considered in three points of view. First, he was made under the *ceremonial* law, and subject to all its rites and ceremonies. He frequented the synagogue and the temple; he was circumcised the eighth day, and dedicated to the Lord in the usual manner; he was observant in paying the dues of the temple. That homage, from which he was exempt as the Son of God, he submitted to observe, lest the Jews should take offence. In no part of his conduct do we find any accusation from his bitterest enemies of violating the law, except in the single particular of his working miracles on the Sabbath-day, which he justified by shewing that "man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man," and that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day." In every other respect

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he was observant of the law to the very letter; and well might he say to his most inveterate foes, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

He was made, also, under the *moral* law, and was observant of all its unchangeable duties. In all his conduct to his Heavenly Father, to his fellow-creatures, and to himself, he was an example of perfect piety, benevolence, and purity. There was, in the whole of his deportment, that which spoke him to be the "Lamb of God," holy, without blemish and without spot. "Such an High-priest became us," was suited to our circumstances, and alone equal to our exigence and danger, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In him alone was exhibited a perfect pattern of obedience to the law of God, and thereby he was prepared, in part at least, to be an oblation for the sins of men. Unless he had been a *spotless*, he could not have been an *acceptable* sacrifice; but as his human nature rendered him an appropriate victim, so also his immaculate purity made him fit in respect of moral quality to be offered up as an expiation to divine justice.

But, besides this, he was made under the *mediatorial* law, a more rigid and awful one than any other. For, standing in the stead of sinners, representing their persons, and being exposed to the penalties of a broken law, he endured the wrath of God which was kindled against us, submitted to that death which was denounced against our transgressions, and "by death destroyed death." He came into the world under the necessity of

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suffering; he came into it principally for the purpose of dying; death was the end of his life, the very design of his being. He came not to reign, but to obey; not to rejoice, but to sorrow; not to live a life of ease and comfort, of dignity and splendour, but of poverty, self-denial, and reproach; and then to expire in agony upon the cross. This was the very object of his appearance in our world, and of this he never lost sight for a moment, amidst the highest efforts of miraculous exertion and the loudest applauses of an admiring multitude. "I have a baptism," he says, "to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

II. Let us observe, in the second place, with what view Jesus Christ was thus "made of a woman," and "made under the law." It was to "redeem them that were under the law, that we may receive the adoption of sons." If we believe that Jesus Christ was that glorious personage who was with the Father before all worlds, that he was his true and proper Son, essentially partaking with him in the perfections of Deity, we shall not admit that he came into the world to accomplish a purpose which could be effected by other means or by an inferior agent. We shall be inclined to assign to him some signal achievement to which the properties of his nature, and the elevation of his rank, were alone equal. Whatever end could have been accomplished by an inferior person we shall not suppose to be the only design of the incarnation of Christ. For He who doeth nothing in vain, and

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wasteth no power in carrying his purposes into effect, He who is frugal in the economy of creation, who is frugal in the economy of his providence, would not lavish a superfluity of greatness and glory upon the work of our salvation. If the ends to be attained could have been attained by any inferior instrumentality, those instruments would have been employed. If the Saviour came into the world for no other purpose than that of teaching a true doctrine, it is plain that this could have been done by the agency of men alone. It was done by Moses, who rivetted the attachment of the people, from generation to generation, to a burdensome and painful ritual; the prophets sufficiently attested their mission from Heaven, and were regarded, by all the pious and thinking part of the Jewish nation, with the profoundest deference. If our Saviour, therefore, came into the world to reveal a fact, such as a future life, and exemplify it in his own person, nothing more was necessary than that he should be a human being. Those, however, who believe that Jesus Christ possessed a higher nature, that he was the Son of God, a divine person, will admit, of course, that the end of his manifestation could not have been effected at less cost.

This leads us to consider him as the Redeemer. He came not merely to exemplify a rule of life, but to satisfy its violation; he came, not to explain the statutes of heaven, but to pay the penalty arising from the curse denounced against their transgression. He came essentially to change the

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moral situation of mankind, to roll away that mass of human guilt which lay, like the stone on our Saviour's grave, entombing all their hopes, and rendering it impossible for them to recover themselves from the condemnation and ruin in which they were involved.

Those who dispute the divinity of Christ act consistently in explaining away his sacrifice and atonement; the two doctrines are inseparably connected, and must stand or fall together, But they who are not so taught, but believe, in deference to apostolic testimony, that Jesus Christ "was with God" and "was God," will admit, with the greatest readiness and gratitude, that he came for the purpose of redemption. And how is this effected? Jesus Christ was made under the law, who was not originally under it, for the purpose of producing that righteousness, and creating that fund of merit in the eyes of an infinitely wise and holy Being, which should be imputed for the benefit of penitent believers, by dying on the cross a death which he never merited; and thus working out a justification, from which the spiritual wants of all mankind should be supplied, if they received his testimony and believed on his name. The character in which he appeared was that of a substitute; it was also that of days-man, a person who mediates between two contending parties for the purposes of reconciliation. He alone being God as well as man, and thus laying his hands on both, was capable of accomplishing this great object; of satisfying the divine justice, and opening for guilty creatures an

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approach to the throne of heaven. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "He was oppressed and he was afflicted;" or, as it is translated by Lowth (and very accurately, in my humble opinion), "it was exacted of him, and he was made answerable." The vicarious nature of Christ's sacrifice, the vicarious character of his appearance on earth, runs through all the statements in the New Testament. It is on this account that our warmest gratitude is challenged, and our strictest obedience required. "The love of Christ," says the apostle, "constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many." "He that knew no sin was made sin for us." "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

It is undoubtedly for the wisdom of the Divine Majesty to determine whether the law shall take its original course, or receive such a diversion as shall insure all the objects for which it was designed. It belongs, indeed, to the Divine Being to be just; but if all the ends of justice be obtained by the substitution of another in the place of the offender, shall we impose limits on the decisions of the Almighty, and say that the right of dispensing with a law, as to the exact direction it may take,

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is not within the prerogative of Him by whom it was made and promulgated?

It belongs to him whose law is offended to determine in what way he will treat the offender; and it is perfectly competent for him to satisfy his own justice by some other method, and to substitute for the death of the criminal the sacrifice and mediation of another, provided all the purposes which could have resulted from the condign punishment of sinners be equally effected.

But believing, as we do, that Jesus Christ is a divine person, the law of God is magnified by his death; the glory of the divine character as a holy being, his hatred of sin, his attachment to the law as a law of purity, appear to be greatly enhanced, and recommended to our notice with the highest advantage, in consequence of this sublime and astonishing event. If our Saviour was indeed the Son of God, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," then, to see him exhibited on the cross, dying under the divine wrath, and crying in the bitterness of his soul, "my God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" is to behold a more costly offering to divine justice, a more glorious assertion of the majesty of the law of God, than could have been displayed in the punishment of millions of creatures, or of worlds. Here we see the glory of the divine character shining forth in a manner the most consistent, harmonious, and consolatory, in the propitiation of Christ. Him hath God "set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare

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his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

He came "to redeem them that were under the law;" and under this comprehensive title is included all mankind; Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, learned and unlearned: wherever human nature is diffused, transgression is diffused with it; wherever a child of Adam is found, there is found one who is under the law; it is a part of his nature, it is a condition of his being, to be born under the law. But as many as are under the law "are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is for deliverance from this curse, which extinguishes every ray of hope, and shuts us up to eternal darkness, that we are indebted entirely to the mediation of our blessed Redeemer. He has delivered us "from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

We have yet to distinguish what is the effect of the divine appointment, and what is the natural result, in the great transactions connected with the sufferings of Christ. It is the effect of divine appointment that Jesus Christ became incarnate, that he was made capable of dying, by assuming a frail and finite nature. This is to be resolved solely into the sovereign pleasure of God; no reason can be assigned for it but his infinite mercy, no other explanation given than that "God is

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love." But when we look at this event in another stage of it, when we consider Jesus Christ as placed under these circumstances, as actually "made of a woman," and "made under the law," by that mysterious union of the divine and human natures; when we contemplate him as performing what he did perform, and suffering what he did suffer, as *our* substitute and on *our* account,—the necessary consequence is such a vindication of the divine character, such a display of the holiness and justice of God, that no lower effect could result from it than the justification and acceptance of all penitent believers. Christ could not but merit eternal life, and purchase for us the blessings of a glorious immortality, if we are interested by faith in the benefits of his redemption. The economy of our redemption proceeds entirely from God, but the connexion of its parts is not entirely *arbitrary*. They cohere together *necessarily;* and the sacrifice of Christ is effectual for the salvation of his people, not merely because God chose to annex such a value to it as might have been transferred to the blood of bulls and goats, but because the blood poured forth upon the cross was the blood of his own Son. It is the dignity of the victim which has completely satisfied the justice of the Almighty; and the redundancy of his merits that has procured for us higher blessings than we can either imagine or comprehend.

The apostle speaks with the greatest confidence, in contrasting the vain sacrifices of the law with the inherent sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ.

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"If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." He has effected for us, *necessarily*, an entire exemption from all liability to punishment, and procured us a title to the blessedness of heaven, because he was the Son of God; and we are interested in him.

It is said, moreover, that he redeemed them that were under the law, that they "might receive the adoption of sons." The immediate effect of Christ's death is the imputation of his righteousness to the believer, and this righteousness produces an instant acquittal from punishment; but such was the exuberance of his merits, such the dignity of his person, and the high complacency of the Father in his work, that it was worthy of him to bestow on them who were members of his Son, greater blessings than those which their first parents had forfeited. It was not merely to relieve from misery that Christ died; it was not only justification that was the fruit of his sufferings; but adoption into the family of heaven, the privileges of sons and daughters for all his believing people. In consequence of being united to Christ by faith and the Spirit, we partake of his peculiar prerogatives; and because he was the Son of God, God has "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying,

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Abba, Father." Thus we are "no longer servants, but children, being made nigh to him by the blood of Christ," and raised, we have reason to believe, to a greater height of happiness and glory than we could have aspired to reach, had we continued in a state of immaculate purity. Christ has *added* to our original brightness; he has not only redeemed us from the first transgression, but *accumulated* blessings which man, even in innocence, could never have obtained.

"Where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Now every humble believer, every penitent approaching to the sacrifice of the Son of God, when he feels his conscience relieved from a sense of guilt, finds at the same time, through the anointing of the Spirit of God, a peace and joy, a confidence and trust, springing up in his mind, which bespeaks a new relation; he approaches the Divine Being in a domestic character; he says, *My* father! God discloses to him his tenderest compassion, taking him, as it were, to his arms, rejoicing over him, and making him a son and heir of the Most High God. Therefore, henceforth he walks with God as a dear child, an imitator of his perfections, a sharer of the fulness of the glory of his heavenly Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." Such appellations as these it would have been impious to assume, if God himself had

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not revealed them to us in his word, such privileges never entered into the contemplation of men in the most exalted state of perfection. God hath "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father!"

Recollect, that if we are under the law, it is in consequence of not having approached to Christ by faith, and not having received the testimony of God respecting him. Recollect, also, that if we are under the law, we are under the curse; no middle state can be devised; there is no state betwixt a state of condemnation and a state of justification, the legal state, which is one of bondage and fear, and the filial state, which is one of confidence and joy; no medium between that state of distance from God in which he appears as an enemy, and the condition of being adopted into his family, and an heir of his kingdom. There is an infinite variety in the human character, there is nothing more mutable than the apparent state of man; but there is an impassable barrier, a fixed line of demarcation, which separates the children of God from the children of the devil. Those who do not receive Christ by faith, remain under the law, and are exposed to all its penalties; they live under its curse; at home, abroad, in solitude, in company, in suffering, in joy, in life and death, in every scene of existence, in every variety of

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condition, the wrath of God, like a dense cloud, hangs over them, replete with all the elements of misery and despair; and it must break upon them sooner or later. It approaches nearer and nearer; and is only prevented, by the slender thread on which their life depends, from discharging its fury on their devoted heads. Nothing can save but the death of Christ, no other name is given under heaven; this is the object to which the eye of faith must be ever directed,—" the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Have you looked to Him? Look into yourselves, and you find nothing but matter for despondency; look into your own hearts, and into your own conduct, and your performances will but remind you of the inadequacy and imperfection of your obedience. Know yourselves, and you know only what must minister to despair; but " this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." If you come to Christ, and commune with him, you will find that poverty is exchanged for riches; condemnation for justification; dismay, and fear, and distrust of God, for a firm reliance on his promises, a strong hold on his mercy, and a filial relation to him as your heavenly Father.

We might suppose that, if men believed these truths in any degree, they would all be either rejoicing in Christ's redemption, or earnestly pressing forward to obtain it; that every assembly would be divided into two classes,—those who, having embraced the salvation which is by Christ,

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find in him the joy and comfort of their lives, and those who, not having found this inestimable treasure, are earnestly desiring to possess it, and sedulously devoted to the search.

But that there should be persons neutral and unconcerned, believing at the same time that the wrath of God is kindled against them, that they are hastening to the divine tribunal, and that those who die in their sins will sink into destruction, is, indeed, infatuation that wants a name; angels look upon it with unutterable surprise, and their joy is proportionably great when they see one sinner repenting. But if there is joy in the presence of the bright inhabitants of heaven over a converted soul, what should be the joy of those to whom the intelligence of a Saviour is brought, who are invited to partake of the salvation which is prepared for them, and pressed to enter into alliance with God? Hear, then, the proclamation which is made to every one of you: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else!" "Fury is not in me; who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them; I would burn them together:—or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace; and he shall make peace with me." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?"

These are truths which you have heard from

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time to time, but they are not on that account less essential to your welfare; for that very reason it is necessary that they should be reiterated, and that the "pure minds" of the most eminent Christians should "be stirred up" by them to fresh diligence and zeal. They are the bread of life, the food of the family of God; all real christians taste of them, and are sustained and fitted by them for all the functions and duties of the christian warfare.

Until you partake of this bread you have no life in you: the spirit is dead, the soul is withered and blasted, torpid and inactive, and lost to God; there is no vital union betwixt you and the Father of Spirits, you are severed from the spring of all felicity, by being in a state of alienation from God. Then you will begin to live indeed, to know the *divine* life, when you come and taste of the salvation of God, when you cast yourselves on the mercy of the Saviour, and say, "Lord, save or we perish." Then the mercy of God will be revealed unto you, and you will one day join in singing "a new song, the song of Moses and the Lamb," which none can sing but they who are redeemed from the earth.

III. In the third place, permit me to observe, that we have presented to us, in this passage, the fitness of the season at which Jesus Christ was manifested; it is described as "the fulness of time." It was the fulness of time, because it was the period foretold by the prophets; Jesus Christ appeared exactly at the time predicted by those

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who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

It was foretold by Jacob, in his dying moments, that it was to take place before political power departed from Judah. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Our Saviour appeared at that critical period; the sceptre had recently departed from Judah, the semblance of political power had vanished from the Jewish nation, Herod had reigned for some time, and it was evident, therefore, that He that was to come was at hand.

It was foretold that it was to be during the existence of the second temple. The prophet Haggai thus comforts those who had witnessed the splendours of the first, and mourned over the meanness of the second as compared with that of Solomon: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." As if he had said, I can easily accumulate riches far exceeding those which Solomon collected, and which may be lavished by the monarchs of the

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earth in all the exuberance of their wealth, "the silver and the gold are mine;" but I will bestow on this house a nobler gift, here will I display a costlier treasure, "in this place will I give peace." There Jesus Christ, the great peace-maker, preached the gospel of peace; in that temple he wrought many of his miracles; and in its immediate vicinity, on Mount Calvary, offered himself up for the sins of the world.

It was foretold, moreover, that it should be within "seventy weeks" from the period marked out by Daniel; and though some difficulty exists as to the mode of computation, yet, on every principle it is plain that they have long since elapsed; and the Jews are, therefore, under the greatest delusion in looking for the Messiah at a future period. Indeed, such is the antipathy of the Jews to this prophecy, that it is a popular proverb among them, "Cursed is he that counteth the weeks."

In short, all the characters of time, though they are not very numerous, as they are not equally important with some others, and were probably revealed only for the purpose of uniting the expectations of the Jews to a particular and defined period; all these characters perfectly conspire with the æra of Christ's appearance. It was on this account, probably, that such a general expectation existed, when Christ came, of the near approach of some exalted personage. In former times, no one was asked whether he was the Christ; but no sooner had John begun to preach a holy doctrine

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than the question was put to him, "Art thou the Christ, or do we look for another?" This expectation is noticed by heathen writers as prevailing over great part of the East, but especially in Judæa and the surrounding country. It was during a period of the profoundest peace; the temple of Janus was shut, and all nations were kept as in a state of watchful silence, waiting for the appearance of this Divine Person, and with ears open to catch the accents of his "still small voice."

It was also a period of considerable advancement in politics, in legislation, in science and arts, and manners: mankind were in a great degree civilized; learning had long flourished, and the most brilliant geniuses had appeared that had ever adorned the annals of human kind. It was therefore a most favourable time to prevent imposture in matter of fact. It was also an age the farthest removed from that credulity which distinguishes ignorant nations; an age of scepticism, when disbelief of all religion prevailed to a great extent amongst the learned. The Epicurean doctrine, which maintained the indifference of human actions and the cessation of existence at death, had swallowed up all other sects. The disciples of this philosophy denied a Deity, or asserted such an ideal one as remains in a state of torpor and inactivity, heedless of the concerns of this lower world. No period could be conceived so little adapted to the exhibition of a *false*, and so well calculated to put to the test the merits of a *true*, religion. They had wits sharpened by curiosity, so that they would

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eagerly inquire after whatever was new; but, at the same time, they were disposed to treat with contempt that which pretended to be supernatural. They had long been accustomed to laugh at their own gods; and though they might imagine that there was some safety attached to the ancient superstitions, yet in their private life and expectation, it is evident that they did not in the least connect any serious anticipation of happiness with the worship, or punishment with the neglect, of their deities. The Infinite Wisdom saw fit to select this time to silence for ever the vain babblings of philosophy, to "destroy the wisdom of the wise," and "bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

It was a most favourable time, inasmuch as it was a period of toleration. Had it been at a later period when men began to attach that degree of importance to religion which was its due, the infant sect might have been crushed at once. But the Divine Being was pleased to suspend the fury of emperors, and to preserve his people by inspiring some measure of the spirit of toleration in the breasts of those who held the sceptres of this world. Nero's persecution was confined, we have reason to believe, principally to Rome and its environs; and ages passed away before any great attempt was made by the rulers of Rome to put down this new religion.

It cannot be said that Christianity stole on the world like a thief in the night; it cannot be said that it owed its success to the credulity of mankind, and that if the generations among whom it at first

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appeared had lived now, they would have reasoned to better purpose. For the productions of *that* age are the admiration of *this;* in works of taste and imagination it has never been surpassed, and it is sometimes considered as the highest praise of writers of the present day, that they exhibit a near approach to the inimitable beauties of the authors who then flourished. The earth was, therefore, in a state to receive this precious seed; He who appoints the seasons, and brings on seed-time and harvest, saw that this was a proper time in which to plant that tree of righteousness which was to stretch wide its branches till it overshadowed the world, and whose fruit was to be "for the healing of the nations."

The fulness of the time was come:—Hence we remark that the event here referred to was the most important that had ever distinguished the annals of the world. The epoch will arrive when this world will be thought of as nothing but as it has furnished a stage for the "manifestation of the Son of God;" when his birth, his death, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to glory, and his second appearance, events inseparably connected, will concentrate within themselves all the interest of history; when war and peace, and pestilence and famine, and plenty and want, and life and death, will have spent their force, and leave nothing but the result, the permanent, eternal result, of Christ's manifestation upon earth; when every other distinction which has marked the individuals, or generations, of our race shall be swept

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away, and all shall be alike distinguished in the annals of the universe by the new and awful character of being associated in the same nature with the Son of God. In the effects of this gracious interposition you are all interested; of its fruits you are invited to partake; you may now reject the offer, you may now refuse this great salvation, but the period of neglect will soon be over—you may now think lightly of the Saviour, but these thoughts will soon be ended. The moment you enter eternity you will see things as they are; the greatness of Christ will present itself to your eye, the vastness of his redemption, the importance of his mediatorial work, the infinite felicity of being saved, the unspeakable misery of being lost,—the thoughts of these will dwell with you for ever. Those who now neglect the gospel will never cease to curse the infatuation of putting away from them the proffered mercy, and judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Now, with drowsy attention, with thoughts dissipated amidst a crowd of vanities, you hear the record of this great doctrine; you have Christ set forth by his ministers as crucified among you; you hear with listless and careless minds these glad tidings, that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." But let eternity disclose itself to your view; let a short period be past either in the enjoyment of the beatific vision of God, or in the dark regions of despair, and how will these subjects then appear?

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Eternity will not be too long either to rue that neglect which has plucked down ruin on yourselves, or to rejoice in that grace of God which has made you wise unto salvation. All the happiness, and splendour, and glory, which shall then be realized by all the ransomed people of God, are so many fruits of the purchase by Christ's death. There is not a single blessing which shall then be enjoyed which is not to be ascribed to the love of Christ in dying for our iniquities, and "washing us from our sins in his own blood."

"What think you of Christ?" The time will come when you *must* think very seriously of him. Some of you, I trust, have thought of him to great and happy effect, have trusted your salvation in his hands, and are "looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God." Remember that whatever be the state of your hearts towards him, you *must* stand at his judgement seat; at his tribunal we *must* all appear to give an account of the reception we have given to his apostles, to his ministers, to the words of eternal life contained in this book. Then those only will have peace and joy who will possess the consciousness that they have embraced Christ; that they have trusted in him in life and in death, have walked in communion with him, kept his precepts, imitated his example, and laid up all their hopes in him, as the Saviour of sinners.

I cannot close without reminding every person present of the awful consequences of remaining under the law. Recollect, wherever you are, that if you are not vital believers in Christ, if you know

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not what it is to have trusted your souls in his hands, and to be justified by faith in his blood, you are under the law. Rejoice not as others rejoice, you have nothing to do with joy; it would be madness in you to taste of joy till this grand impediment to your happiness is removed. If you are under the curse of God, what have you to do with joy? The joy of a maniac dancing in his chains, the joy of a criminal on his way to execution, is reasonable in comparison with the joy of the man who says, "Soul, take thine ease," whilst the wrath of God hangs over him, and he knows not how soon it may fall.

Let us, then, all flee to the Saviour; let us, without delay, lay hold of the great atonement; thus shall we "be justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Christ is ready to receive us; Christ says to every one, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, "seek ye, then, the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

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XXI.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT IN THE STATE OF THE RICH AND THE POOR.*

PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, SEPTEMBER 20, 1829.

PROVERBS xxii. 2.—*The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.*

THIS book consists of a number of short sentences and aphorisms, that relate to human life and manners, and to virtue and vice. It is not necessary for us to attempt to trace any particular connexion between the passage which has just been read and the surrounding context. What was the train of thought by which the inspired writer was conducted from one of these truths to another, it is unnecessary anxiously to inquire. It is obvious there was some law of association which governed his mind, though it eludes every attempt at investigation on our part, and would lead us into a useless and intricate research. The doctrine which is to be deduced from the words you have just heard read, is, however, worthy of our most serious regard. It declares there is a natural equality in mankind, notwithstanding the diversified appearances of some of them, and the different stations they are destined to occupy in the present condition of being: it assures us that the rich and the poor meet together, that they coincide and agree in many of the most important circumstances, and that the differences which appear to exist between them are, for the most part, of a superficial and, therefore, of a transitory nature. "The

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Lord is the maker of them all." The sacred writer thus introduces all of us into an equal and common relation to God, who is the great Parent of us all. We are the creatures of the same hand, the subjects of the same government; we occupy the same economy of divine providence; and, as to our destination, we all stand in relation to the same future and eternal state of being. These two distinctions and divisions of society have existed in every period. It is impossible to avoid them: and any attempt to establish an equality of possessions in the present world, would be replete with disappointment, confusion, rapine, and misery. The greatest disturbances mankind has ever experienced, have arisen from abortive attempts of this nature: nor can any one seriously consider the causes from which these two conditions of society spring, but he must despair of ever realizing any thing like equality, or any thing approaching to equality, as to the possessions and enjoyments of the present state.

It has been urged in favour of such attempts, and with some degree of plausibility, that a scheme of this kind was executed at the first beginning of Christianity, that the saints at Jerusalem had nothing which they called their own, but threw their property into a common stock; and out of that stock they relieved the distress and poverty of their persecuted brethren. But there is great reason to conclude, as Mosheim* has very

* See his "Commentaries on the Affairs of the Christians," (Vidal's translation,) vol. i. p. 202, and the reference there made.—Ed.

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judiciously shewn, that there was no such thing as community of goods established among them, and that the right of property was not formally relinquished; but that it was customary for all who possessed property, to hold themselves in readiness to relieve the exigencies of those who applied to them. It does not appear that it was ever hinted at by the apostles themselves, who were at Jerusalem, or made even a temporary law of that church; but every one was left to act agreeably to the dictates of his own mind: and the apostle Peter aggravates the guilt of Ananias and Sapphira, by declaring, that while the estate "was in their own possession, was it not their own; and after it was sold, was it not in their own power;" and that no necessity existed for resorting to falsehood, when they laid the price of it at the feet of the apostle. It never prevailed in any other church. We have no intimation that it was adopted in any other of the great churches, which were planted by the apostle Paul; and in his epistles there is no reference to any similar regulation, though he alludes there to a large collection, which Paul and the apostles were engaged in making in those churches, for relieving the distress of the saints of Jerusalem. The pressure of calamity was local and temporary, it was occasioned by peculiar circumstances of time and place, and never pervaded the other parts of Christendom. It never was made a law by the apostle Paul; nor, as a permanent regulation, was it countenanced by the apostles at Jerusalem.

It would be wasting your time, to spend more

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words in pointing out the folly and absurdity of every attempt to equalize the possessions of mankind. I am persuaded there are none here, that permit themselves to be deluded by the sophistries of the designing and wicked who propagate this statement. But it is of great importance for us to consider, because it is intimately connected with our duties and prospects, in what great points the rich and poor meet together, and that the Lord is the maker of them all: that each of these respective classes may learn their proper duties to one another, that the poor may learn not to envy and murmur, and the rich not to despise and oppress. Then will society be happy, when the poor and the rich unite in spirit to promote the great purposes of social order and happiness, in entire and equal subjection to the Father of spirits, who is the fountain and source of every good.

In considering this subject permit me to observe,

I. That the rich and the poor meet together in the participation of a common nature. They are equal sharers in the common nature of humanity, in distinction from those who are in a lower, and from those who are in a higher order of beings. The faculties by which this nature makes itself known, are exhibited with equal clearness, and certainty, and activity in both these classes. The poor as well as the rich give the most unequivocal indications of the possession of that reason, which is the grand distinction of man, and forms the chief difference between mankind and the beasts that perish. Reason may be cultivated to a higher

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extent by some of the rich, in consequence of the more improved education which they may procure, and of the leisure which their station commands. But decisive indications of a reasonable nature are presented in the lowest walks of society; and they are sometimes such as greatly to surpass and eclipse the indications of intellect in the higher classes. Every age of society has produced persons who have broken through the difficulties and disadvantages of their station; who have surmounted the obstacles by which they were surrounded, and have reached a high position in a career of virtuous probation, among those who have set out on a more elevated stage. And, on the contrary, among the sons of opulence, some have been found who possess such an imbecility as no education could remedy: their knowledge has never been of any use to them; and the learning which has been bestowed upon them has rather been an incumbrance than an assistance to them: their knowledge has remained a dead mass, which the mind could never animate,—a sort of raw produce, out of which nothing useful or ornamental to society could be extracted. When this imbecility has prevailed to a certain extent, so as to invite a comparison with the degree of knowledge which the mind is capable of attaining, it shews its native disadvantage, and is never more conspicuous than in the case of those who unite a large portion of human attainment with a portion of radical imbecility.

The poor and the rich have equally the power

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of ascertaining general principles, of forming conclusions as to the future from the consideration of past events, and of rendering their senses conducive to those general and abstract ideas in which all real science and knowledge consists. Thus you see that the poor and the rich, in the great faculty of the understanding, afford proofs of equality; and no difference exists between them but such as may be easily accounted for by the circumstances of human life.

With respect to their moral sensibilities also, the rich and the poor meet together. They possess alike that conscience which "either accuses or excuses," and they possess that cognizance of the purposes and intents of the mind, which connects it with a system of legislation, with the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment. The poorest, as well as the richest, is capable of feeling these sentiments. The hopes and the fears of a future world act as powerfully upon the poor as upon the rich; and that legislation which appeals to the conscience, and which refers to the primary distinctions of the human mind between right and wrong, is calculated to take as much hold of the one as of the other.

In regard, also, to devotion, which by some men of profound thought is declared to be the great characteristic of man, in opposition to the brutes that perish, these two classes meet together. There are many examples, among the poor, of persons who are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love him." In the poorest breast we find the flame of devotion

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extent by so… and with an intenseness and purity as great more improv… those who are more exalted. Though the and of the le… may have some advantages in the greater But decisive in… of their knowledge, this deficiency is fre- presented in th… compensated to the former, by a greater are sometimes … and unity of attention, and by their eclipse the indi… readiness to one object. It is a question classes. Every … difficulty to determine which of these persons who hav… more favourable to the cultivation of and disadvantage… whether poverty, with all its destitution, surmounted the ob… ignorance to the divine life than affluence rounded, and have … temptations. A course of piety is career of virtuous … is *practicable* for every individual; have set out on a m… eternity alone can decide whose the contrary, among … the most numerous, and whose have been found who … to the growth of religion. as no education could … poor meet together in the has never been of any us… human mind, which give ing which has been bestow… it distinguishing in num- been an incumbrance than … same state in the rich their knowledge has remain… ly considered. The the mind could never anima… ter is more private, duce, out of which nothing … with regard to to society could be extract… ere public, becility has prevailed to a cer… l exalted invit… comparison with the d… If … mind is capable of at… advan… d is never … who uni… with a po… rich have equ…

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burn; and with an intenseness and purity as great as in those who are more exalted. Though the latter may have some advantages in the greater extent of their knowledge, that deficiency is frequently compensated to the former, by a greater simplicity and unity of attention, and by their entire devotedness to one object. It is a question of much difficulty to determine which of these stations is more favourable to the cultivation of piety, and whether poverty, with all its destitution, is a greater hindrance to the divine life than affluence, with all its temptations. A course of piety is *difficult* for all, but *practicable* for every individual; and the light of eternity alone can decide whose situation has been the most hazardous, and whose the most favourable to the growth of religion.

The rich and the poor meet together in the primary passions of the human mind, which give birth to whatever is most distinguishing in man: and these are found in the same state in the rich and in the poor, essentially considered. The exhibition of them by the latter is more private, giving birth to good purposes; but with regard to the former, the exhibition of them is more public, because they stand in more powerful and exalted stations, and act on a more extended stage. If we trace the passions of men to their primary elements, we shall find the virtues and vices of the poor and of the rich spring from the same sources. The guilty passions that agitate the breast of the peasant, and lead him to disturb the peace of his neighbourhood, are of the same nature with those

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that disturb the tranquillity of nations, in the breasts of princes. The same injustice, the same low ambition, the same love of acquiring that which is not his own, that renders a peasant a nuisance to the village where he resides, renders an unjust prince the terror of his subjects, the source of iniquitous wars, and a stain and reproach to his species. The person who, in the poorest situation, in a peasant's cottage, is led by a love of order, and by native benevolence of mind, to diffuse peace and comfort around his own circle, and, so far as his influence extends, in his own neighbourhood, evinces the same spirit with the individual who would diffuse peace and order through a distracted empire, and who lays the foundation of tranquillity for distant ages, by the enactment of the most wholesome regulations and the most enlightened laws.

The more we analyse actions, and trace them to their primary elements, the more we shall perceive the identity between the rich and the poor, as to their intellectual, moral, accountable, and devotional capacities. The rich and the poor occupy the same department of the universe; they are subjects of the same moral government, and are destined to be judged equally and impartially, by the same laws, at the final and awful distribution of reward to the just and to the unjust.

II. I would observe that the rich and the poor meet together in the process of the same social economy, in the same necessary intercourse of human life; they are closely connected with each

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other, and equally form parts of the same human family. It is impossible for us to say which of these subdivisions of society is, in its place, the most important; which of them ought to be most respected; which of them most cherished. The higher can by no means say to the lower, with truth or propriety, "I have no need of thee;" nor can the lower retort upon the higher, "I have no need of thee." If the lower order occupy the place of the feet and hands, which execute the purposes of the mind, the higher occupy the place of the head, which is the seat of counsel, and is necessary for the direction and preservation of the whole social body. Here we see how necessary both these classes are to the general order, and to the diffusion of peace and happiness throughout the whole. According to the degree in which this is felt, in proportion as the industrious citizen, the ingenious mechanic, or the laborious husbandman who cultivates the soil, in any community, is destitute of encouragement, society languishes; and in proportion to the reasonable, not redundant, remuneration of labour to the industrious classes of the community, is the diffusion of comfort and enjoyment through the whole body.

The higher classes must, on reflection, perceive, that they are indebted to the lower for all they enjoy. The distinctions of wealth, and stations of authority, which they are so proud to display, and by which the higher classes are raised above the poor, are supported by the produce of the field and of art; and these are combined by the hand

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of honest labour, in such processes, as the ingenuity of the lower classes has devised. "The king himself is served by the field." Those higher classes are supported by the continual machine of labour, which is going on among the inferior classes of society; and were it to stop, it would tend to the stagnation, instead of the steady flow, of luxurious enjoyment among those higher classes. The poor might here, with greater propriety than the rich, adopt the language of an early apologist for christianity, and say, "Were we to retire from you, you would be astonished at your own desolation; we should leave you little but your temples and your gods."* There may be some who might

* Mr. Hall here evidently referred to the language of the celebrated Tertullian, *Apologet*, cap. xxxvii. "Hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum. *Sola vobis relinquimus templa.*" There may probably be, as is sometimes conjectured, a little overcharge of rhetorical exaggeration in this; yet, whoever meditates upon the report made by the circumspect and prudent Pliny to the emperor Trajan, (Lib. x. Ep. 97), will perceive that even in his time, at least in the Pontic province, the christians far outnumbered the heathen worshippers. "Multi omnis ætatis, *omnis ordinis*, utriusque sexus etiam, vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur. Neque civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est." From what follows, it is evident, too, that heathenism had been in great peril, and the temples nearly forsaken:—"*Certè satis constat, propè jam desolata templa cœpisse celebrari*, et sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti, passimque venire victimas, quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur." This, however, by the way; for though it bears upon an important point in the history of christianity, it falls not within the scope of this sermon.—Ed.

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not choose to adopt the language of this statement; but it is not too much for the poor to say to the rich. Were they to retire, no mind can adequately portray the lengths and depths of that desolation and misery, which would be sustained by all else, but especially by those in the higher walks of life. In vain would they retain wealth, if there were no hands to be employed; and, were no commodities of any kind presented to them, they would live in a state of destitution, greater than the meanest of their dependents, or they must endeavour to apply themselves separately to those arts, each of which, in order to produce in perfection what they value, is the business of a life. The pinnacles of the proudest edifice rest on a basis, that comes into immediate contact with the surface of the earth, or is buried partly under it, and is invisible; so, all the improvements of wealth, nay all the distinctions of royal grandeur, rest on the industry of the poor, upon their silent, unperceived industry, working out of the view, and frequently out of the contemplation of those who are most indebted to it. Let no one look with contempt on the meanest of his fellow-creatures, on account of his having to gain his bread "by the sweat of his brow." That was the appointed lot of our first parents after their fall, and it was the condition of *all* in the primitive state of society. It is to the industry of the lower classes, that the distinctions and splendour of the highest are to be entirely ascribed.

On the other hand, let not the poor say to the rich, "we have no need of you." Were they

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to retire, the effects would be of a very different kind, but they would be equally melancholy. The destruction of the social fabric would be the infallible result. That wisdom which is necessary for the good of the whole, is found in persons of exalted station. There is the mind that casts its eye over the whole machine of society, discovers its abuses, and aims to correct them; the mind which watches over the execution of the law, gives birth to splendid examples, and refines and embellishes whatever it embraces. It comprehends the order of civil government, and those principles whose operation harmonizes all. These are founded on wisdom, deliberation, and experience, and on the force with which public opinion arms those who are placed in elevated stations. Each of these classes, then, is in its separate place, essential to the welfare of society; and the whole has for its basis the industry of the poor. Were all those, who by their leisure are able to cultivate their own minds, to diffuse the knowledge of true morality, and embellish the manners of mankind, by engrafting new improvements, giving existence to wholesome laws, and seeing them properly executed, what a paradise would the world become!

* * * *

These considerations will more than reconcile us to that inequality in the condition of society, which for the most part prevails; they will lead us to admire the infinite wisdom of God, who has given birth to those principles which tend to give security and happiness to all, to the poor

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as well as the rich. By these means society is really united together; so that, while every one is consulting his own interest, he is at the same time promoting the interest of the whole, even more entirely and effectually, than he could have done, if he had separately and intentionally devoted himself to it; and each acquires, by the force of his industry, what no compulsory distribution of labour could possibly have secured. You see how admirable is the wisdom displayed in such a constitution of society, as by the union of its parts under the administration of a wise government, renders every individual, who acts most agreeably to his own interest, at the same time the promoter of the public good. Such a state of society could by no possibility be produced by any technical or mechanical arrangements. The infinite wisdom of God works out this order from the selfish passions of men, and leads each, from a consideration of his own interests in his own station, to operate most effectually for the public benefit. Were those who live in the higher stations of society to lavish all that could be spared from their own expenditure by the most rigid parsimony, and apply it in mere almsgiving, it would be infinitely more injurious than their indulging in even the luxuries of their station: and the proper outlay of their wealth, in the conveniences and comforts of life, is productive of infinitely more good, and of an order of good more than equivalent to any, which an expenditure to the same amount in almsgiving and charity could effect. The rich, enjoying with

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moderation that affluence which God has put into their hands, without allowing their reason to be inflamed with pride, and sensuality, and every one enjoying the good things of this life, at the same time preserving the power of meeting the exigencies of others, much more contributes to the healthful state of society, than the largest distribution of almsgiving, were such an exhibition of enjoyment and wealth to cease; and the poor, while only earning their bread "by the sweat of their brow," lend themselves to the diffusion of happiness and comfort over the whole.

III. We remark that the rich and poor meet together in the house of God. If there be a place, and a time, where those sentiments should be suspended, and at which the emotions connected with the operation of riches and poverty, and the conduct to which they give rise, should suffer a temporary pause, the house of God is precisely that place, and the worship of God, that time; when the rich should forget they are rich, and where the poor should forget they are poor; where they are called to reflect upon that original equality in which mankind was created. In the presence of the great and good Being, they should forget all their distinctions, and recollect their essential relation to Him, who is equally the Father of all mankind.

James, when he was addressing the poor and the rich under the influence of christian principles, says, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low; because, as the flower of the grass, he shall

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pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways." The rich man, if he is a christian, will rejoice in that he is made low; will rejoice in returning to the presence of his God, under a sense of his nothingness, and with a consciousness of meriting nothing: this ought to be the experience of every one who is approaching the footstool of the Divine Majesty. The poor man, on the contrary, delights in being truly exalted. He reflects that he is adopted into that family, of which all the saints "in heaven and earth are named;" he rejoices in the presence of the rich, under a sense of spiritual elevation. The rich descends, in the presence of the poor, into a voluntary humiliation. The one feels the pleasure of descending, while he reflects on his meanness and guilt as a sinner, and lays aside the consideration of all that might have a tendency to lift him up in his own eyes; and the other finds unspeakable consolation in losing sight of his poverty, and in contemplating only the ineffable dignity to which he is exalted as a child of God, a believer in Christ, and an heir of glory. Into the presence of the Divine Being they do not come as rich and poor. It is no part of their business, it is not fit for the occasion on which they are convened. They are convened on common ground, under a deep sense of the necessities of their common nature. Apart from any relations they

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bear to each other, they prostrate themselves before the infinite God, they deprecate the anger which none can sustain, but which they have equally merited; which is not to be shunned by human arrangements, or by the efforts of human power and influence; they supplicate that mercy which is equally revealed to the rich and to the poor, and which is the only stay and support of a sinking universe. That mercy is divinely free through the sacrifice and blood of the divine Son. They strengthen themselves for their race, which will terminate, as to all, in an everlasting condition of glory or of woe. In imitation of the holy apostles, they gather fresh grace as they approach Him who is the fountain of grace. They implore the fulfilment of his promises, and the influences of that Spirit who is equally necessary to sanctify the body of the elect of God, to whatever stations they belong, or by whatever variety of fortune they may be distinguished. They look forward to that "new heaven, and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," and to those loveliest regions of light and glory, where all the distinctions of the present life will be entirely forgotten, where the meanest will have a portion with the most elevated in the favour of God, and "a crown of immortal glory." In this sacred presence all mean and transitory distinctions are lost sight of, are levelled; all mankind feel themselves on one common footing, and prostrate themselves in the presence of Divine Majesty, who is all in all. There "the poor man rejoices in that he is exalted, and the rich in that he is made low."

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A very celebrated poet and nobleman, who died some years ago, was in the habit of attending a prayer-meeting in the country village where he lived, and where a few poor people were accustomed to assemble to seek the presence of the Divine Majesty. It was at first customary for these humble persons to make way for him, if he happened to come in a little after the appointed time; but he expressed his unwillingness to receive these marks of attention and respect, and said, he should be contented if he were left to occupy the lowest station. In other places he claimed for himself, and thought he had a right to claim, the distinctions of his rank; but there he felt himself in the same situation with themselves. In this state of mind he entered into the genuine feelings of christianity. He delighted to come into the presence of that Being, who levels all distinctions; He who smites the proud with a stroke which can never be survived, and has declared his judgement of the humble and contrite in terms which can never be forgotten.

They who cherish other sentiments are forgetful that it is the same Great Being who is the protector of all his poor, and who regards with contempt those who despise others that are permanently afflicted with adverse fortune. In the divine presence each of these distinctions is alike lost sight of; and all true Christians will at last be brought to feel their relation to one common Father, as heirs of the same inheritance. There is "one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all." They embrace each other as fellow-heirs of the

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same eternal inheritance. Let us, therefore, enter into the presence of God more under the influence of christian sentiments. Let the poor forget themselves as poor, and consider themselves as rich in being children of God, and heirs of heaven. Let the rich recollect his wealth only as a trust with which he is charged. Let him forget all but his responsibility, and that will constitute a motive to humility in the presence of Almighty God. The utility of divine worship in this case appears most evident. The sentiments which it calls forth, are such as hinder our running into the excesses to which we are exposed: and nothing is more salutary or wholesome, than that temporary suspension of undue notions of rank, which is derived from an approach to that Being with whom all are on a level, whose majesty fills heaven and earth, and in whose presence nothing can be exalted, except as he draws it towards himself. As I see the time is advancing, I shall not enlarge on these considerations, but advert very briefly to one or two remaining particulars. I will add,

IV. That the rich and poor meet together in the circumstances of their entrance into this world, and in the circumstances of their exit out of it. We have beheld the identity of human nature, notwithstanding the artificial disguises which these distinctions bestow for a time. Look at the great man in his origin. Look at him as he comes into this world, and say whether you can detect the least difference between the offspring of the peasant and of the prince. They come into the

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world under marks of the same destitution, and weakness, and misery. Both alike enter with cries expressive of distress, as if conscious of their arrival in a valley of tears. Both would close their eyes in darkness, were it not for the breasts that give them suck, and the knees that sustain them. Both are indebted to that aliment which nature has administered to the mother for the support of her children; and both, by the tenderness excited by their cries and tears, gain access to a mother's care, and to a father's heart. The Deity has provided no outward physiognomy to distinguish the rich and the poor: and no inquisitive eye can discover to which of these classes any newborn infant is likely to belong.

Let us here trace the progress of their being farther, until we come to their final exit, and to their departure out of this world. In some of the most important particulars they entirely coincide as to the circumstances of their departure hence. At the moment when they quit this state of being the poor man lays aside his poverty, the rich man lays aside all the appendages of riches, his grandeur and dignity; all are alike deposited by the possessor before he passes to the mysterious and eternal bourn. No man goes into the invisible world, no man retires to the sepulchre, without dropping the distinction of riches and poverty. The rich man, it is true, is carried to the tomb by mourners, whether real or artificial; and though survivors endeavour to maintain the distinctions of rank and elevated station in the regions of destruction and mortality,

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yet all is in vain. They wage a fruitless war with corruption and decay. The inscription first disappears; then the monument moulders into ruin; the dust itself is scattered or mingled with surrounding earth, and the last place that knew the dead, "knows him no more for ever." The very names of those who have most disturbed the peace of society, and have been a terror to their species while living, are heard of no more. It is left to the antiquary of a future age to speculate upon the import of the remaining letters that composed a part of their names. Where are the men of genius that lived before the flood? They have retired from the memory of mankind; history records of them only that they lived and that they died, and leaves all the rest to be filled up by conjecture and imagination.

V. This subject reminds us of that period when all the pomp and distinctions of the universe shall coincide in one point, melt into one entire mass, and present themselves in one vision. The time is coming when the rich and poor will not only meet as to the circumstances of their dying hour, but as to their allotted state and condition of being. We have seen both going to the grave. Alike they occupy the place appointed for all living; alike they seek kindred with corruption, earth, and worms. But they will appear again; and they will appear again for purposes that were never accomplished before. They will appear for the purpose of undergoing a serious review by the Master that created them, who fixed their class, and appointed their station. They will appear to account "for

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the deeds done in the body." Then it will be found, that many a person has occupied a station which he was not fitted to occupy; that he possessed talents which he was not willing to employ; and that he wore a character which he was not qualified to sustain. Then the Great Governor of the whole will take a review of his creatures; he will recast their parts; he will suffer none to appear but in their proper character; and the distinction of his approbation will, in no degree, turn on the transient distinctions in their present circumstances as rich and poor. The poor who has been the servant of the Most High will be made rich. No obscurity will be felt, but his lustre will be as the sun shining in his strength. Instead of persecution and oppression, he shall receive "a crown of life that fadeth not away." The rich man who was a despiser of God, shall, at the same time,—so far from obtaining an interest in the favour of the Great Sovereign of the world,—if he looks back on the talents which he has perverted, on the opportunities he has lost, and on the force of his influence which he has not employed for the great ends of his being in serving God, and in serving his generation, he shall curse his wealth, which was the source of crime to himself and others; and will see in it a weight only sinking him lower in perdition.

The rich who have been the persecutors of the children of God, will then, in the utmost agony, lament their crime, and will "call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb." The purpose for which the Divine Being

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will then manifest himself is such, as it was never attempted to accomplish before,—for *the trial of the actions of men.* As they are now displayed, they can only be judged upon incompetent evidence, and often upon defective principles; but then the whole character will be weighed in the balance: the destiny of every man will be adjusted, and determined, for ever. The Divine Being will sit in judgement upon every man, in order to divide mankind into two eternal states; to banish one class to the regions of darkness and despair, and to receive the other to himself; "they shall enter through the gates into the city, and reign with Him and with his Son for ever and ever."

I shall attempt a very brief improvement of this subject, by addressing a few considerations to each of the classes mentioned in the text. Let such as are rich recollect they are rich for the purpose of benefiting their generation, and that they are "the servants of the most high God." "We are not our own, but are bought with a price;" let us glorify God, whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve. These are the sentiments of every disciple of Christ, but they are not the sentiments of every one who now hears me. There are, probably, some unhappy, miserable men, who are not the disciples of Christ. Let each person estimate himself in the sight of God by this consideration: is he living to himself, or is he living to Christ? Is he living for the purpose of luxurious enjoyment?—he is walking in a vain shew, and not discharging his appropriate duty, not considering

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his riches as the means of doing good, as talents wherewith he is to profit, and which he must occupy till the Master come. He does not consider that they are not his own; he does not use them as one who bears in mind that divine price by which he has been bought. He has no true respect to that authority under which he acts; nor does he pay allegiance to the only King of kings, and Lord of lords. We must all stand before his tribunal: God himself will be the judge. He has committed all judgement into the hands of that very Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all.

Let such persons consider seriously whether they are living to themselves or to God. Let them consider that, if they are living to themselves, they miss the very end of their being; they are committing a mistake which can never be repaired; they are guilty of an error which admits of no correction. They mistake the end of their being, which consists in glorifying God, in acquiring his image, in fulfilling his will, and in laying up treasures in heaven. They commit such an error as no human folly can equal, such as no human virtue can expiate. This is a condemning error: this is the fatal and awful mistake of men; that they live as their own, while the voice of God, the dictates of conscience, the blood of Christ, the precepts of the Spirit of Truth, and the opening light of eternity, all shew that "we are not our own:" they shew that we are the creatures of another, the possession of another. Our Lord *will come forth;* he will discover all who have lived to

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themselves, he will take account of "the quick and the dead; and all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Let those who are rich remember that, as christians, it behoves them who possess riches not to fail in good works. Let them act from christian principles, and with christian motives, and with a view to christian reward. Let them recollect that they are bound to ascertain whether they are christians. Till we are christians, we cannot serve God as christians: we can serve God only in that state which belongs to us. Till we are christians, we cannot pay due regard to his will, we cannot act with a view to his glory, nor according to the instructions of his word, nor can we seriously expect that eternal life, which rests no where but on his promise, which he will fulfil to "all that love his appearing." Let it be the care of all in the presence of God in this assembly that they be christians; let them secure a portion among the saints; let them see that they have a place among the people of God; that they are united to Him "of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named." Let them seek to be renewed, regenerated, and sanctified, and washed in the atoning blood of the Saviour, to be made members of Christ, and heirs of his kingdom; to be fitted and prepared for his eternal glory. Let them seek to be vessels of honour, sanctified by the Spirit of God, and fit for the Master's use,—fit to

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serve him in the lower functions of his temple on earth, and to serve him hereafter in his eternal kingdom and glory. What will it avail any of us to possess now what we must then cease to possess; what we can possess only till we arrive at the threshold of death, and shall look back on the distinctions which must then have vanished; when we lay down our bodies in the grave, and have nothing before us but a vast eternity, the complexion of which will be decided by the will of another,—by the will of that Being who sees not with the eyes of flesh and blood, before whom riches and poverty, wisdom and folly, and all physical distinctions are nothing; who will regard nothing in his creatures but the will to please him, and obedience to that will? The happiness to be obtained by faith will be infinitely superior to the happiness which is derived from the objects of sense. For a man thus to lose his own soul, will be to sacrifice the great end of his being.

But there are some here to whom the possession of riches is sanctified, who consider them as a great trust, for the use of which they are responsible, and who are asking, What shall I do? What return shall I make to God for all his benefits? and who tremble, lest at the final account they should be found unfaithful stewards. They trust in the Saviour; they cultivate communion with God; they condescend to men of low estate; they are rich in good works; they lay up a good foundation for the time to come; they will surmount the perils of the most prosperous fortune;

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they will combine the riches of this world with the riches of glory; they will be distinguished in both worlds, standing complete and ready for their Master's will; they are armed for the combat in the present state, and fitted at any moment to take wing, to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Happy those who, while they have abundance of the things of this world, have also a treasure elsewhere! While they walk in light, and glory, and reputation on earth, they seek first the honour that cometh from above; they seek, indeed, *no higher honour* than that which comes from Him who is the arbiter of all destinies.

Let me now say a word to the poor. If they are poor, and yet partakers of true piety springing from the faith of the gospel, let them not repine. Let them indulge no envious thought at those who possess more of this world's goods than is allotted to themselves. To such I would say, Recollect that your happiness depends not on the station in life which you occupy, but on the manner in which you perform its duties. A small circle is not less complete than a large one: a humble field of occupation, yielding proper fruits in their season, will be recognized by God and approved of men. You will have the testimony of your conscience that "in simplicity, and godly sincerity, you have your conversation in the world." You will leave a testimony behind you of the power of religion: your remains will breathe a sweet odour in all the churches of which you formed a part: you will dignify a low station, you will rescue it from all

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reproach; for the reproach consists not in poverty, but in yielding to the temptations of poverty. Riches, in themselves, confer no lasting honour, but as they are accompanied by a resistance to their peculiar temptations. You are walking in the footsteps of "the Lord of all," who, when he came into the world, made poverty his abode, became a companion of fishermen, and at length a companion of sinners on the cross. Let such as are poor seek to be "rich in faith:" let them exult and rejoice in the prospect of future happiness: let them rise above the sorrows of time in the contemplation of the glory which awaits them. Your recompense is above; your pleasures are in heaven. If you are real christians, you would not relinquish one portion in heaven for all the happiness of the present state. Avoid every temptation to dishonesty, to prevarication, to envy, to murmuring, to discontent. Avoid all those temptations which arise from a narrow and scanty fortune. Shew how religion can dignify the lowest station in society, and do all possible honour to that station. Thousands of saints have done this. Our Saviour illustrated the sorrows and privations of poverty; and, if you are animated by his spirit, you will walk in his steps; and after having suffered with him here, you will be also glorified together with him, and reign with him for ever and ever.

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